

Bomb blast hits Algerian market, at least seven dead

ALGIERS (AFP) — Seven people were killed and eight others wounded Tuesday when a bomb went off in a fruit and vegetable market in a town southwest of Algiers, Algerian security officials said.

They said the home-made explosive device went off in the market in Khemis Miliana, about 100 kilometres southwest of the capital.

It was the second such blast in less than a week.

At least 18 people were

killed and 61 others injured last Friday when a bomb ripped through a busy marketplace in the Al Harrach suburb of the Algerian capital, state radio said.

A recent upsurge in violence in the area has been blamed by the authorities on members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the most radical of Islamic groups fighting the government of Algerian President Liamine Zerroual.

Observers said Tuesday's

attack appeared to mark a return by the GIA to attacks on civilian targets which have been on the increase this month.

On May 5, armed men attacked a livestock market in Khemis Miliana, hanging one young man from a nearby tree, local media reported at the time.

In the last 15 days, armed groups have attacked on a cinema, a train, a railway station and another market in areas around Algiers.



SUDANESE OIL REFINERY: Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir on Tuesday unveils the cornerstone for a new oil refinery in Khartoum. China will provide the main funding for the project (AFP photo)

U.S. envoy reiterates opposition to Cypriot missile deployment

NICOSIA (AFP) — Washington remains opposed to deployment by the Cyprus government of advanced ground-to-air missiles it ordered from Russia last year, a U.S. envoy said after talks here Tuesday.

"We think it's a bad idea for them to come here," the U.S. State Department's special coordinator for the divided island, Thomas Miller, said after a 90-minute meeting with Cyprus President Glafcos Clerides.

"We're not challenging Cyprus's right to make decisions, we're just saying that

their delivery is not helpful," the U.S. envoy said.

Ankara has threatened to take drastic action if Nicosia goes ahead with plans to deploy the Russian S-300 missiles in the south of the island later this year.

Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş, who is due to meet Mr. Miller later, said on Monday that he would accept no "bargaining" in his opposition to the planned deployment.

"The Greek Cypriots have embarked on a pure adventure...it's madness to want to deploy these weapons," he told Turkey's Anatolia news

agency.

The Cypriot government and Moscow say the missiles are purely defensive but Ankara has said they threaten the Turkish-held north of the island and the Turkish mainland.

Mr. Miller said his return to the island for a fresh round of talks with Cypriot leaders, his second in a month, was a sign of Washington's continued commitment to find a solution to the Cyprus problem.

"Our efforts will continue, as I think my presence here makes abundantly clear," he said.

Netanyahu gets Chinese pledge to keep nuclear know-how from Iran

BEIJING (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu obtained a renewed pledge from Chinese leaders Tuesday to withhold their nuclear and ballistic missile technology from Iran, Israeli sources here said.

The Chinese side also vowed to refrain from selling nuclear technology to other countries that were likely to pass it on to Iran.

"The Chinese side said they are not selling, and will not sell in the future, not only nuclear weapons but also nuclear technology to Iran or other countries that would then transfer it to Tehran," the Israeli source told AFP.

Netanyahu says Israel needs money to carry out redeployment

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday linked an Israeli troop pullback in the West Bank to more foreign aid.

Mr. Netanyahu reportedly is seeking \$1 billion from the United States for the redeployment, in addition to the \$3 billion Washington gives Israel every year in military and economic aid.

"Israel does not have the necessary assets to carry out a significant redeployment of the type we are talking about without foreign aid to pave bypass roads [for Jewish settlers] and for other security issues," Mr. Netanyahu told Israeli army radio.

The United States is seeking Israeli approval for a 13 per cent pullback, but Mr. Netanyahu has resisted, saying such a withdrawal would endanger Israel's security.

Israeli mapmakers have estimated that such a pullback would isolate 15 Jewish settlements in the West Bank, turning them into islands in Palestinian-controlled areas.

and technology.

Israel and its allies in the U.S. Congress accuse Iran of seeking to acquire military technology which threatens Israel.

During the talks, China's president and premier both urged Mr. Netanyahu to speedily resume stalled Middle East peace talks.

"I hope the Israeli leaders will be far-sighted, as the reestablishment of stability and peace in the region answers the common aspirations of all countries in the world and is in the interests of all countries in the region, including Israel," Mr. Jiang was quoted by state television as saying.

Foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said the Chinese side maintained that the principle of land-for-peace should be the basis for any Middle East peace talks.

"All sides concerned should implement the resolutions and the standards reached," the foreign ministry spokesman said at a press briefing.

Mr. Zhu also asked Israel to swiftly implement the U.N. resolution calling on it to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon.

He also told Mr. Netanyahu that China would like to see Israel resume talks with Syria and Lebanon in an effort to achieve a more comprehensive peace agreement.

"We are deeply concerned with the stalemate in the Middle East peace talks," the Chinese premier was quoted by the foreign ministry as saying.

"We believe the prolonged stalemate in the Middle East peace talks is not in the interest of the two sides of Arab and Israeli, and it will have adverse effects on regional peace and stability."

Saudi FM visits Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal arrived here Tuesday for a two-day visit to discuss boosting relations between the two former rivals, officials said.

Prince Saud is to deliver messages from King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz to President Mohammad Khatami and hold talks with Iranian officials.

Saudi officials told reporters at the airport that the two countries were to sign a memorandum of understanding on Tuesday.

The Saudi diplomat has said his visit was taking place "as part of continuous contacts between Tehran and Riyadh and to discuss all issues of mutual interest."

"Relations between the two countries have nothing to do with a third country," said the prince, who is expected to hold talks with Mr. Khatami, the head of the Expediency Council, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, parliamentary speaker Ali

Akbar Nateq Nouri and Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi.

Relations between Tehran and Riyadh were strained for nearly two decades after Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, but have improved considerably in the past year.

Saudi Religious Affairs Minister Abdullah Ben Abdul Mohsen Al Turki has been here since Friday for a ministerial meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

On Saturday, Iran hailed Saudi Arabia's announcement ruling out any foreign participation in the 1996 bombing of a U.S. airbase in the kingdom that killed 19 U.S. airmen, following reports implicating Tehran.

The improvement in ties between Saudi Arabia, a close U.S. ally, and its non-Arab neighbour was accelerated by the 1997 election victory of Mr. Khatami, a moderate cleric who has called for better relations with the Gulf Arab states.

Iraqi delegation to Iran to discuss improving ties

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An Iraqi delegation travelled to Iran Tuesday for meetings with Iranian leaders on improving relations between the two countries, an Iraqi official said.

The Iraqi delegation, led by secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Saad Abdul Majid Al Faisal, is to discuss a wide range of questions concerning rapprochement between Tehran and Baghdad, the official said.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said this month in Paris that Iraqi-Iranian relations "were slowly and gradually improving."

He noted that they have recently exchanged thousands of prisoners from their 1980-88 war and that Iranian pilgrims

had been allowed to visit Shiite Muslim holy sites in Iraq.

The Iraqi newspaper Al Shabab said late last month that Baghdad was "disposed toward renewing its acceptance of the 1975 Algiers accord" fixing the Iraqi-Iranian border, on condition that Tehran give up claims for damages tied to the war.

On the eve of the eight-year long war, Baghdad declared the Algiers accord "null and void."

Apartment from the prisoner of war issue, relations between Iraq and Iran are complicated by the fate of dozens of Iraqi civil and military airplanes flown to Iran as a safe haven during the 1991 Gulf war. Tehran has yet to return them.

British nurses give go-ahead for release of 'blood money'

LONDON (AFP) — Two British nurses convicted of murdering an Australian colleague in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday gave the go-ahead for \$1.2 million "blood money" to be released to the brother of the victim, their British lawyer said.

Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan instructed their lawyers to release the money, held in trust in an Australian bank, to Yvonne Gilford's brother Frank, Gilford as soon as possible.

The release ends days of criticism from the Gilford family that the money had not been

paid despite the nurses' early release after just 17 months in prison.

And it comes despite a statement by the Riyadh lawyer for the two nurses, Salah Al Hejailan, that the pair would not pay out the money as that would amount to a confession of guilt.

The money was agreed under the Islamic law of Saudi Arabia, that Mr. Gilford signed in September to waive his right to demand a death sentence for the killers of his sister.

Parry's British lawyer Roger Panone said: "Miss Parry has given instructions that the

money should be released."

He said the instruction had to be sent to the trustee in charge of the bank account where the money is and should be with Mr. Gilford within a few days.

He added: "I understand that Lucille McLauchlan has issued similar instructions."

And Michael Burnett, the Australian lawyer acting for the nurses, confirmed Mr. Gilford should receive the money "in the next day or two."

The two women arrived back in Britain last week after Saudi King Fahd commuted their sentences to the time served.

Remand extended for Arab Israeli officials accused of helping Hamas

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Jerusalem district court extended by eight days Tuesday the remand of an Arab Israeli deputy mayor accused of helping raise funds for the radical Palestinian Islamic group, Hamas, officials said.

Suleiman Eghbariah, deputy mayor of Um Al Fahm, an Arab Israeli town northeast of Tel Aviv, was arrested along with four busi-

nessmen from east Jerusalem for allegedly funneling money raised abroad to the families of Hamas militants jailed by Israel.

One of the other suspects was released on bail Monday after the court ruled there was insufficient evidence linking him to the affair.

The court on Monday ordered two other suspects held an additional week and it was due to rule on the case

of the fifth man later Tuesday.

The suspects were accused of channelling money from "hostile elements" abroad via an Islamic finance company, Beit Al Mal, which operates in the West Bank city of Ramallah, east Jerusalem and Um Al Fahm.

Israeli authorities have outlawed Beit Al Mal and frozen the company's assets in east Jerusalem.

Israeli warplane raids south Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — An Israeli warplane struck locations in southern Lebanon on Tuesday following a deadly attack by Hizbollah, police said.

A fighter-bomber fired air-to-ground missiles on valleys near the village of Yater, east

of this southern port city, police said. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The raid came hours after a militant from the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) was killed in a Hizbollah attack on an SLA

position in the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

A 40-year-old woman and a 32-year-old farmer were wounded in a reprisal mortar barrage against nearby villages by Israeli troops following the death of the SLA

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10Mr. Bogus Show
15:30Castle of Adventure
16:00The Album Show
17:00Ushuaia
18:00 Medical Programme (on sporting)
18:30Drama — Acapulco Bay
19:00Le Journal
19:15Science Magazine
19:30News headlines
19:35Comedy — Buddies
20:00Doc. — Envoye Special
20:30Doc. — Glass Jungle
21:00Varieties
21:15Kung Fu
22:00News in English
22:30 Mini-series — Gulliver Travels
23:50Roland Garros

PRAYER TIMES

03:56Fajr
05:28(Sunrise) Duha
12:33Dhuhr
16:13Asr
19:38Maghreb
21:09Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweilieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Terra Sancta Church

4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Arem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweilieh Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4634757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the

Department of Meteorology

Relative warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures higher than average by five degrees centigrade, clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm.

AMMAN

18/35
Aqaba22/38
Deserts15/37
Jordan Valley20/39

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 35, Aqaba 36
Humidity readings: Amman 16 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Youssef Naser751144
Dr. Issam Asmar890504
Dr. Fakhri Tayeh4915880
Dr. Nidal As'ad751672
Firas pharmacy5661912
Al Asema pharmacy4637053
Al Salama pharmacy 4636730
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660

Nairoboh pharmacy

4623672
Najib pharmacy5347632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakr 276852
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Randa Shahin995170
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery592199
The Islamic, Abdul566131/7
Husseini Medical Centre Tel. 585856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Akileh Maternity4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman,4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
University Hospital5353444
Al-Munshar Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5661646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital5674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990999

J. Electricity Authority

815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital(03)14111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 1527001 or 44(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30Damascus (RJ)
09:30Jeddah (RJ)
09:45Larnaca (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
15:55New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05Istanbul (RJ)
18:40London, Brussels (RJ)

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital(03)14111

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07:30Damascus (RJ)
09:30Jeddah (RJ)
09:45Larnaca (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
15:55New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05Istanbul (RJ)
18:40London, Brussels (RJ)

19:20

Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:35Paris, Rome (RJ)
00:15Beirut (RJ)
01:00Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights

10:30Cairo (MS)
11:00Sanaa, Hudaib (YU)
11:30Kuwait (KU)
12:30Jeddah (SV)
14:10Tunis (TU)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
15:05Vienna (OS)
16:30Algiers (AH)
18:35 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
19:05Frankfurt (LH)
21:10Beirut (ME)
23:20Istanbul (TK)
23:20Amsterdam (KL)
23:45Athens, Beirut (OA)
00:15London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW)

10:20Amman (QAIA)
(Then proceeds to Marka Airport) (RW)
18:00Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
19:20 Tel Aviv (QAIA) (RW)
23:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

06:30Larnaca (RJ)
08:50 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00Rome, London (RJ)
12:45Istanbul (RJ)

20:10

Colombo (RJ)
20:35Beirut (RJ)
21:00New Delhi (RJ)
21:10Cairo (RJ)
21:10Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:20Bombay (RJ)
21:25Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
22:15Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
02:00Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights

06:35Larnaca (CY)
07:30Paris (AF)
08:45Beirut (ME)
09:20London (BA)
11:30Cairo (MS)
11:30Ta'iz, Sanaa (YU)
12:45Kuwait (KU)
14:00Jeddah (SV)
15:00 Bahrain, Muscat (GF)
15:10Tunis (TU)
15:30Vienna (OS)
17:20Sharjah (AH)
20:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
00:40 Damascus, Amsterdam (KL)
04:00Beirut, Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

08:00Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
09:30Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
17:30Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
22:50Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Aisha attends graduation ceremony

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Aisha Bint Al Hussein Tuesday attended a graduation ceremony held at Al Quds Secondary girls school for students who completed an army training course. The Princess presented certificates of appreciation to those excelling in the training courses.

Princess Aila opens stamp exhibition today

AMMAN (Petra) — To mark Jordan's 52nd anniversary of independence, HRH Princess Aila Bint Al Hussein today will open a three-day documentary stamp exhibition organized by the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications. Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Samir Gammo said the ministry will issue a new collection of stamps in three denominations under the theme: "The 75th anniversary of the Transjordan Emirate."

Pakistani Air War College delegation arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — The acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Major General Tahseen Shurdm, Tuesday received a delegation representing the Pakistani Air War College, headed by Maj. Gen. Salim Inshad, and briefed them on the strategic importance of the region and the role of the Jordan Armed Forces in maintaining security and stability at the regional and international levels.

Higher temperatures forecast

AMMAN (Petra) — The weather will remain relatively hot today with temperatures rising 4-5 degrees Celsius above the normal seasonal average, the Meteorology Department said. The department attributed the rise in temperature to a hot air mass coming from the Arabian peninsula via the Red Sea.



Her Majesty Queen Noor cuts a ribbon at the inauguration ceremony of the Modern Schools-Al Asriyya in Khilda on Monday (Photo by George Crystal)

Queen inaugurates Modern Schools-Al Asriyya

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor on Tuesday inaugurated the Modern Schools "Al Asriyya" in Khilda, according to a press release.

Queen Noor commended Al Asriyya's "Special Education Programme" for children with learning disabilities and speech and hearing problems and the school's programmes for the development of creative productivity and talents. She expressed hope that they

would develop into useful educational models for schools throughout the Kingdom, it said.

Al Asriyya Modern Schools, established in 1995, are co-educational and cover grades kindergarten through 12th. Their facilities, which are located on 21 dunums, include laboratories, libraries, a diagnostic unit for special education, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a tennis court and playgrounds.

The schools prepare students for the Jordanian Secondary Education Exam (tawjihi), or the British IGCSE and the A-Levels system. Its extra-curricular activities, which meet and develop the interests of students, include the community service club, the Crown Prince Award and various competitions and functions arranged in cooperation with other schools, the statement added.

Workshop on public sector quality opens

MADABA (Petra) — The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) Tuesday opened a three-day workshop on comprehensive quality in the public sector for secretaries general of ministries and directors and assistant directors of departments.

The workshop will determine the quality of services offered in public sector offices and the changes required to improve them, according to the organisers.

Deputising Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Minister of Administrative Development Bassam Emoush delivered the opening address in which he stated that the government was going ahead with reforms in the public administration system aimed at achieving a qualitative improvement in the various departments.

Dr. Emoush told the audience at the Ma'in Spa resort near Madaba that the government is determined to develop public administration, which entails decentralisation with an emphasis on human resources.

Stating that the government is determined to overcome the obstacles in the way of improvement and reform, the minister said the government will introduce incentives to employees to increase their competitiveness and prevent imbalances in the system.

The minister said the scheduled national conference to address unemployment is also part of the ongoing national reform efforts.

In his remarks to the audience, IPA Director General Zuhair Kayed thanked the German Agency for Technical Cooperation for sponsoring the meeting and for continuing cooperation with the IPA in matters pertaining to public administration.

The meeting is part of government efforts to develop and modernise procedures at the political, economic, social and administrative levels to adjust to the requirements of new international trends and developments, he noted.

Dr. Kayed added that among the challenges facing the country are globalisation, privatisation and competitiveness, which he said require quality performance from government agencies.

Announcement on Israel's rejection of U.S. proposal 'necessary' — Majali

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has said Israel's rejection of the U.S. proposal for a West Bank troop redeployment indicates that the Netanyahu government is placing obstacles in the path of the peace process.

Speaking in a television interview with the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation, Dr. Majali said it is now necessary that the U.S. officially announce Israel's refusal of Washington's initiative, which was accepted by the Palestinians.

The peace process cannot be advanced if no progress is made on the Palestine issue, he said, adding that a compre-

hensive peace settlement is also linked to the return of the Arab territories occupied in 1967.

His Majesty King Hussein's call for Arab solidarity and unity reflects his keenness on unifying the Nation's stand vis-à-vis the major challenges of the present regional situation, the prime minister said.

He said the King has been playing a leading role as he realises the dangers and the need for solidarity.

Referring to the U.S., Dr. Majali said it has an important role to play, being a full partner in the peace process. There is great hope that the U.S. administration will persuade the Israeli prime minister and

his government to understand that peace means commitment to the implementation of signed agreements, that the process should continue from the point it reached earlier, that peace means security for all parties involved and that no stability or development can be achieved without all parties feeling that they can exercise their full rights without infringement on their national aspirations, he added.

Dr. Majali said there is an international strategy for peace that aims at establishing stability and sustainable development, and any retreat from it would deal a blow to the international community's will.

The Europeans have recently stepped up their role, he noted, citing a visit to the region by the British prime minister during which he witnessed the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

Dr. Majali said Jordan supports any call for an Arab summit to help re-establish solidarity among Arab states to confront Israel's intransigent stands.

An Arab summit, he added, should reaffirm support for the Palestinians and their struggle for freedom. The prime minister stated that Arabs should transcend their disputes in order to focus their time and efforts on dealing with Israel's intransigence.

Negotiations continue over entry of melons stranded at Lebanese border

By Mohammad Ben Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Ministry of Agriculture and the Jordanian embassy in Beirut are negotiating with the Lebanese government to allow the entry of 100 Jordanian trucks carrying watermelons that have been stranded at the border for eight days running, an official said Tuesday.

The Lebanese government barred the entry of the trucks, carrying 2,680 tonnes of watermelons, on the grounds that Jordan had exceeded the

annual quota for such imports.

"We made contacts with the Lebanese president, the prime minister and the minister of agriculture over the issue and we have promising signs," Salem Lawzi, president of the state-run Agricultural Marketing Organisation, told the Jordan Times.

Under the joint annual agreement, up to 4,000 metric tonnes of duty-free watermelons can enter into the Lebanese market from May 1 to June 10.

Jordan has already exported 4,700 tonnes of watermelons

to Beirut.

"The Lebanese council of ministers is scheduled to discuss the matter during its session on Wednesday," Mr. Lawzi added.

Mr. Lawzi said the shipment was in response to demands by Lebanese traders who were supporting Jordan in the current dispute.

"This is not the first time such an incident has occurred," he claimed. "Our Lebanese brothers have broken many agreements before and so have we, but we've always found a solution," said Mr. Lawzi.

In 1997, the two countries faced a similar problem after Lebanon banned trucks carrying vegetables from entering the country because the Lebanese market was saturated. Jordan reacted by halting a shipment of Lebanese vegetables at the border. The issue was resolved after several days.

Jordan exports vegetables to Lebanon during the winter as well as melons in the summer in exchange for Lebanese oranges, apples and cherries under a schedule worked out by the two countries.

Prince Hassan tours northern valley

(Continued from page 1)

kind, combines a health care centre, a community rehabilitation centre, a women's activity centre and a kindergarten. The compound provides services to a Palestinian refugee community numbering 15,000.

In his address at the inauguration ceremony, Prince Hassan thanked the U.S. government and praised the level of cooperation between the U.S., Jordan, UNRWA and the local community.

He underlined the right of the refugees to a decent life and called for constant partnership in endeavours to this purpose.

Prince Hassan also referred to Jordan's policies and its efforts to respond to the humanitarian needs of the refugees, including their political right to return to their homeland and/or compensation.

The Crown Prince urged

donor nations to continue their support for UNRWA to enable it to continue humanitarian and social services to the refugees.

After Waqas, Prince Hassan visited the electronic control centre at the King Abdullah Canal where he said it is of vital importance for development, calling on the local farmers to exert efforts to maximise production.

Earlier, at the town of Kramich, Prince Hassan had breakfast with the citizens of the town at the invitation of Deputy Mijhem Souqar and enquired from the residents about their needs and their demands.

"We are working together for the common good... working in solidarity and close cooperation on this good land," Prince Hassan told his hosts, who accorded him an enthusiastic welcome by lining the streets, cheering and saluting His Majesty King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan.

The Crown Prince paid a

surprise visit to the community school, where he inspected the classrooms and met the students enquiring about their needs and talking to their teachers to learn about the educational process.

Uthman addressed to the people of the town, Prince Hassan underlined the need for linking education and vocational training programmes with Jordan's actual needs.

Prince Hassan noted that Jordan has adopted a development strategy for the coming decade based on scientific approach with accurate definition of the development requirements and a clear outline of its objectives within a comprehensive and transparent framework.

Prince Hassan underlined the need for determining public expenditure's priorities before September in the course of preparations for the 1999 fiscal budget. He said that plans are underway for the holding of a national conference to

review the country's economic achievements.

Emphasising the importance of defining development needs, the Crown Prince told his audience that they should avoid making fancy demands and concentrate on the realities on the ground. The young, he said, should also be involved, because consensus can only be achieved through convincing.

Describing the Jordan Valley as a development region the Crown Prince said that the people should develop comprehensive and integrated means for the management of water, agriculture and tourism.

He called for cooperation and integration to achieve comprehensive development and attain the maximum level of productivity stressing that every citizen is responsible for safeguarding the national interests.

Prince Hassan later opened a fish breeding project in the Jordan Valley.

Viagra stirs interest throughout country despite unavailability

By Munther Murjan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The controversial impotency drug Viagra has become the talk of Jordan, even though it is not yet available in the country.

But several have managed to buy the drug while travelling abroad and many men are still waiting for a decision by the Ministry of Health and Medical Care authorising the drug's local agent to import Viagra and sell it across the Kingdom.

Many who have returned after visiting the United States, where Viagra was recently authorised, said customs officials at the airport were not looking for the drug because Jordan has not banned it.

"All circles of society are talking about it," said a leading politician who requested anonymity. "It appears to have taken over other issues of local concern, including soaring food prices and living costs."

Ruba Hmoud from the Sabbagh Drug Company, local agent of Pfizer, the U.S. drug manufacturer, said the company had submitted a request to the Ministry of Health to formally register and sell the potency drug.

"It may take weeks or longer to get the approval... it all depends on the ministry's technical committee, which is responsible for licensing any newly introduced drug," she told the Jordan Times.

"We have had a considerable amount of requests for the medicine from various pharmacies. We hope that the ministry will conclude their tests in the near future."

Ministry of Health officials declined immediate comment.

"We have been stormed by a barrage of phone calls from the local press corps asking us to spell our stand on Viagra," said a ministry official. "I have no comment for now."

However, a handful men said in private they managed to obtain some Viagra pills smuggled from neighbouring countries despite growing alarm over the side effects it can cause.

Others said friends brought them in from the United States where the medication was recently approved.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said on Friday it was investigating the deaths of six people who took Viagra. In Egypt, officials said three people were hospitalised and put in intensive care after taking the pill.

Several local pharmacies said they have been flooded with requests, even from Gulf Arab

nationals visiting Jordan, for the pill, mainly from men over 50.

"Everyone is asking if we have this magic pill," said Renad Ahnadi, a pharmacy owner. "Some do it discreetly while others do not mind asking for it openly even if there are other customers in the pharmacy."

"One even offered to pay JD140 for two pills telling me: please give me a chance to experience my manhood again," she added.

Several pharmacists said they expected the Ministry of Health to approve it but only after extensive research that might take over a year. Religious officials appeared to have steered clear of taking a stand though Egyptian clerics have approved it.

However, Abdul Rahim Issa, head of the Jordan Pharmacists Association and head of a committee in charge of medicine registration, sounded more cautious.

"I oppose this drug for various reasons," he told the Jordan Times. "First, the fuss created by people regarding this drug has been blown out of proportion and \$300 for 30 pills is too much."

"Above all, I do not appreciate the low-level marketing methods that were used to stir public interest and worldwide news coverage it generated that helped raise public interest," he said.

"There is almost unanimous agreement inside the association on blocking its registration in Jordan because the drug is obviously dangerous and should not be sold to people," he said.

"Just look at all the reports of the various deaths of people who used it... these reports are growing at an alarming rate."

Dr. Issa warned of severe consequences if any pharmacy is found selling Viagra illegally.

If approved, the price of Viagra is not expected to be different from the United States, where a pill costs around \$10.

"The price would depend on the decision made by the Ministry of Health, as they are the ones charged with such a decision," Ms. Hmoud said.

The pill comes in two forms of packages — 1-pill and 4-pill packages.

However, she said obtaining the drug will not be easy even after the ministry approves it as it will only be sold with a prescription.

In a country where the population grows annually by 3.4 per cent — one of the highest in the world — many officials fear authorising Viagra in Jordan could further swell the population and place a greater strain on the already stretched economy and other services.

Anani denies King cut off contacts with Netanyahu

(Continued from page 1)

quoted as saying.

"I think the [stalemate] is putting too much pressure on us by our neighbours in the Arab World, and everybody is accusing us of really encouraging the current Israeli government to keep on maintaining its current unacceptable position."

"Jordan does not deal with the peace process in terms of ultimatums, or dates. We do not do that, but then, you know, we have to remind the Israelis that we are making a great deal of sacrifices on the other side."

Dr. Ensour said that the Israeli prime minister had promised King Hussein some positive news soon during their last meeting, but nothing has materialised so far.

He added that the present stage of the peace process bears the signs of a dangerous and very obscure future.

EU blasts Netanyahu, says dialogue 'non-existent'

(Continued from page 1)

been a collapse in regional economic cooperation and development efforts.

"The tremendous damage and the obstacles in all these channels prove that the stoppage of the peace process is destroying every possibility of good neighbourly relations," he said.

Mr. Marin also defended a recent commission recommendation that goods manufactured in Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories be excluded from a 1975 Israel-EU free-trade agreement.

Zvi Tenney, a senior Israeli foreign ministry official, denounced what he called Mr. Marin's "confused remarks."

"Such unjustified criticism can only cause serious

damage to relations between Israel and the European Union," Mr. Tenney told AFP.

"We hope that the 15 [EU members] will refuse to follow this bureaucratic," said Mr. Tenney, who is in charge of economic relations with the EU for the foreign ministry.

He also denounced the EU stance on goods made in Jewish settlements as a "politically motivated" attempt to influence the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

"If some people think that imposing a tax of 10 or 15 per cent on grape exports from the settlements will force the Netanyahu government to make concessions, they are badly mistaken," he said.

But Mr. Marin said the EU

was only expecting Israel to obey the rules and had held off any action for months so as not to disrupt U.S. attempts to revive the peace process.

"We did not want to make problems while Netanyahu was meeting with [U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright]," he said. "Everyone signalled us, 'Stay calm, give peace a chance.' We gave it a chance, but now we're acting."

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have been deadlocked since March 1997, largely due to Mr. Netanyahu's failure to carry out promised transfers of further West Bank land to Palestinian control and his policy of expanding Jewish settlements on occupied land.

Court sentences Egyptian sisters to death

(Continued from page 1)

face and dragged her body to the bedroom.

The two brought a wet towel, pressed it against her mouth and nose until she passed away, stole her jewellery as well as other goods and fled the house after locking the door.

They sold the jewellery, but were arrested by police as they attempted to leave Jordan via the Port of Aqaba.

The two women, who reportedly confessed their crimes to the police and the criminal prosecutors, pleaded not guilty during the trial. The body of the late Kurd was discovered by her two daughters when they came to visit her the same day at 3:00 p.m.

Criminal Prosecutor Zubair Atiyat had asked the tribunal for the maximum penalty.

The verdict will automati-

cally be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.

During the past six years, five women have been executed in the Kingdom, including three in 1997 for premeditated murders. Eleven people were executed in Jordan last year, sparking protests by world groups opposed to capital punishment including the London-based Amnesty International.

what's going on

FILMS

* Spanish film "Bodas de Sangre" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday, May 28, at 5:00 p.m.

* Children's film "Touchdown on Button Moon" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

* "Stanley and Iris" at the American Center, Amman on Thursday, May 28, at 5:00 p.m.

* "The Rotund World of Botero" (about Colombian artist Fernando Botero) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday, May 28, at 6:00 p.m.

JORDANIAN NATIONAL SONG FESTIVAL

* Performances by the Jordan Armed Forces and Jordan Broadcasting Corporation bands. Issa'il Khader, Salwa Al 'Ass, Mohammad Waleh, Fouad Hijazi, and Faisal Hilmi at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

ART EXHIBITION

* Exhibition of personal oil paintings of artist Mohammad Al Hadidi (in his residence), Dahiyat Al Rashid, near Dawlat Hotel (Tel. 5154567).

LECTURE

* "The Arab Economic Options" (in Arabic) by Dr. Issa'il Sabri Abdullah at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Exhibition of works by students of the Nazareth School at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh until May 28.

* "Graphic — Oil on Paper" exhibition by Guider Trila at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until June 25.

* Works by Christian de Portzamparc at the University of Jordan, until June 4.

* Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Eiel Adnan entitled "Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 28.

Northern Irish Protestants halt Catholic church picket

BELFAST (R) — Protestants Tuesday called off their picket of a Roman Catholic church that has for almost two years been a potent symbol of sectarian division in Northern Ireland.

Priests and politicians hailed the move, which came just three days after voters on both sides of the Irish border voted overwhelmingly in referendums to back the Northern Ireland peace accord.

The picket, which created headlines around the world, had sparked riots as parishioners were attacked, cars set alight and mass-goers taunted. Riot control cost the police one million pounds (\$1.62 million).

The picket started in September 1996 after a Protestant "Orange Order" was banned from marching through the Catholic village of Dunloy near the largely Protestant town of Ballymena.

Catholic nationalists had opposed the marches, which they viewed as sectarian triumphalism.

The 300 worshippers who attended mass at the Church of Our Lady in the Ballymena suburb of Harryville had to battle their way through an angry Protestant mob, braving abuse and even volleys of fireworks.

Catholic homes in the area were firebombed and one woman was dragged from her car and beaten after she left a Saturday evening service.

After a recent march passed off peacefully, the protesters decided to call their picket off.

But they warned in a statement: "Should it be deemed appropriate, we reserve the right to recommence our action if unpunished nationalists attempt to further curtail our culture in the future."

Ballymena Councillor

Jayne Dunlop welcomed the end to the picket. "Everybody was very tired of it. With the agreement, we want to move forward and this is a small but very welcome step forward," she said.

It also helped to deflate some tension in the lead-up to the summer marching season when Irish republicans have urged Protestants to tone down their celebrations of 300-year-old victories over Catholics.

Almost three out of four people in the British province backed the historic Good Friday peace agreement.

Last Friday's referendums appeared to show a genuine hunger for peace in a land where 3,600 people have died in three decades of sectarian and political strife.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who has invested much political capital in

ending the conflict, said he was determined not to let dissident gunmen and bombers derail the peace train.

"Both ourselves and the Irish government will show no mercy to anyone going back to violence," he told the Belfast Telegraph Monday. "There will be no fudge between democracy and terror."

Releasing prisoners early and getting guerrillas to hand in their sizeable arsenals of weapons were two of the most contentious issues in the referendum campaign. They continue to spark controversy.

The accord maintains Northern Ireland's links with Britain but builds new cross-border bridges with the Irish Republic.

Northern Ireland now faces another bruising battle in the build-up to elections on June 25 for a new devolved assembly.

History is one long

remembered yesterday in Northern Ireland where hatred between Protestants, who make up sixty per cent of the population, and Catholics spread like a cancer for centuries.

One in four people know someone who has been killed in the conflict and one in 10 has had a member of their family killed.

Mr. Blair, determined to keep up the momentum for peace, praised the people of Northern Ireland for breaking decades of deadlock by backing the settlement. "I know for many of you it was not easy. You had your doubts. You made a leap of faith."

Northern Ireland has seen many false dawns before, but Mr. Blair has sensed that the tide of history is changing. "We have produced the architecture for peace. You must build the home and live in it, together."

Blair urges welcome to Japanese emperor

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair appealed to former prisoners of war Tuesday to set aside their bitter memories of Japan and welcome Emperor Akihito on a state visit aimed at boosting lucrative trade ties.

But his appeal looked set to fall on deaf ears with about 1,000 veterans planning to turn their backs on Emperor Akihito as he travelled up the mall to Buckingham Palace with Queen Elizabeth in an open carriage.

The veterans, demanding a full apology and increased compensation for their treatment in work camps during World War II, are furious that Emperor Akihito is to be given Britain's highest award for chivalry, the order of the Garter.

But Mr. Blair said Emperor Akihito's visit was a vital step on the road to peace.

"We must not forget the past or the terrible suffering of our POWs," Mr. Blair wrote in the top-selling Sun newspaper. "But I believe it would be wrong for these feelings to dominate our relations with Japan. Wrong for us to perpetuate this bitterness down the generations."

Pointing to Japan's trade and diplomatic cooperation with Britain, he said it was partly because of the sacrifices of British troops that Japan was now a peaceful democracy.

Emperor Akihito's spokesman told BBC radio that the emperor would refer to the POW issue during a

speech at a formal banquet at Buckingham Palace Tuesday evening.

"I don't think anyone of us would try to ignore it or gloss it over. He does feel very deeply about the suffering of people due to the war, and the empress also, so this will come out I'm sure," Kazuo Chiba said.

"His feelings can be expressed if they are not political and within his heart he has very deep feelings of sympathy and very deep feelings that such things should never happen," Mr. Chiba added.

Some of the 265 Japanese firms operating in Britain have encouraged their workers to turn out to greet Emperor Akihito as he proceeds up the mall with the queen in what would effectively be a counter demonstration.

Thousands of Britons were forced by the Japanese to work as slave labourers in World War II and many were tortured and died in captivity. Japan says compensation paid under a 1951 peace treaty and recent apologies by the government answer the case.

The veterans demand that the Japanese government make a full apology and give 14,000 pounds (\$22,800) to each former prisoner in compensation.

"We were nothing but slaves. We had to do their bidding on pain of death," said Bill Holihaim, founder of the Japanese Labour Camp Association.

Joan Bulley, interned outside Shanghai at the age of

four, said she had seen prisoners being tortured. "I lost my childhood," she said.

Arthur Titherington, captured in Singapore in 1942 at the age of 20, said: "It wasn't 50 years ago. To us it was yesterday."

"When, where and on what occasion was Emperor Akihito chivalrous?" he asked, referring to the chivalry award the emperor will receive from the queen.

He accused Mr. Blair of being more concerned with cementing trade ties with Japan than resolving the issue of wartime compensation.

Mr. Blair noted in his article for the Sun that Japan was Britain's biggest export market outside Western Europe and the United States. Japan is also a major investor in Britain, providing about 65,000 jobs, and channelling more than 40 per cent of its manufacturing investment in the European Union into Britain.

The Daily Mirror attacked Mr. Blair and the decision to award Emperor Akihito the Order of the Garter.

"Today we are all being asked to put money before pride," the newspaper said. "Tony Blair... would prefer that we think of all those Japanese yen that we earn today."

The liberal Independent broadsheet, in contrast, said Emperor Akihito ought to be given a dignified welcome.

Japanese gas-attack doctor sentenced to life in jail

TOKYO (AFP) — A Japanese court Tuesday sentenced a top doctor to life imprisonment for spreading deadly Sarin gas in the Tokyo subway in the Aum Supreme Truth cult attack that killed 12 people and injured thousands.

Once one of Japan's most promising heart surgeons, 51-year-old Ikuro Hayashi admitted being one of the five Aum members, who released the Nazi nerve agent in Tokyo's subways in March 1995.

Presiding judge Megumi Yamamoto described the crime as "unprecedentedly vicious."

"Despite the fact that he was a doctor, his act led to tragic consequences which have to be condemned severely," the judge told Tokyo District Court.

Even as the sentence was handed down, however, the cult was on the comeback trail, with officials from a government commission estimating it now had 5,500 followers, according to the daily Asahi Shimbun.

As the judge described the attack on the Tokyo subway, Hayashi wiped away tears with a handkerchief.

Later, showing little emotion, Hayashi bowed deeply and looked directly at the judge after being called forward for sentencing. Hearing that his life would be spent behind bars, he bowed again.

The court was silent. Hayashi escaped the gallows because the court "had to hesitate in imposing capital punishment" after his testimony led to the arrest of cult guru Shoko Asahara, said the judge.

Some relatives of the victims had sympathized with the doctor after his repentance, he added.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto was equivocal about the decision to let Hayashi escape death.

"There are many arguments in the prosecutors' final speech," he told reporters. "I feel mixed emotions (about the sentence) when I think about those who died and their families."

Hayashi left the cult shortly after his arrest one month after the subway attack. He admitted six counts including the subway attack and the confinement and murder of an anti-sect Tokyo notary clerk in February 1995.

Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer for the subway victims, said: "Even if Hayashi leaves prison on parole, those who suffered so much continue their rehabilitation. I think that is



Ikuro Hayashi seen in a 1995 file photo (Reuters photo)

contradictory." The former doctor was one of the few middle-aged members of a cult that mainly highly educated young people.

The only leading members in his age group were the 43-year-old leader Asahara and the so-called construction minister, 48-year-old Kiyuhide Hayakawa who has admitted murdering a lawyer along with his wife and baby son.

Asahara and other leading members are still on trial.

Officials quoted by the Asahi Shimbun said the cult had 5,500 members, 15 offices and more than 100 communal residences. Funds were pouring in, it said, from new members' fees and at least six section computer shops in Tokyo.

On May 1, the cult held a fund-raising meeting of at least 300 disciples outside Tokyo.

And leaflets purporting to come from the cult have been delivered to homes in Tokyo asking "Why does the Aum Shinrikyo still continue to grow?" and "Why do all the members of the Aum Shinrikyo look happy?"

They quote 31-year-old businessman Akira Ojima as saying: "The Aum is the path to real happiness. I always hated the society and the media."

"I suffered mental anxiety a lot and was trying to find ways to get out of that state. I finally found it in the Aum Shinrikyo."

One leaflet, promising a free book from the sect, protests: "The Aum members are not as bad as the media reports."

There was no reply from telephone numbers provided in the leaflets. A senior Tokyo's metropolitan police official said the life sentence for Hayashi was "appropriate." Some of the cult's victims were still in hospital, he said.



Inhabitants of the ethnic Georgian village of Tagiloni watch their homes from a destroyed railway bridge. Separatist Abkhaz forces Monday overran the village despite a ceasefire agreed upon (Reuters photo)

Georgian battles continue despite ceasefire pact

DIKHAZURGA, Georgia (R) — Clashes between Georgian armed groups and separatist Abkhaz fighters in a Russian-patrolled buffer zone continued Tuesday despite a ceasefire agreement reached between the sides overnight.

Burning houses marked the scene of sporadic fighting in the village of Dikhazurga, two km from Georgian government-held territory near the de facto border with the breakaway Black Sea province of Abkhazia.

Thick black smoke poured from the village, accompanied by the rattling of small arms fire and occasional explosions in the zone patrolled by 1,500 Russian peacekeepers and monitored by 100 United Nations staff.

Lieutenant-Colonel Reinhard Hollinger, the commander of the U.N. mission in the western Georgian town of Zugdidi, said the Georgian and Abkhaz fighters had not completely disengaged as was agreed.

"There is still some fighting going on and the combatants have not left the zone as they should have," he said.

The U.N. observers and Russian peacekeepers made joint patrols for the first time to try to enforce the ceasefire.

"Most of the observers are pessimistic about the ceasefire," one of the observers said. "We don't believe it will hold."

Ethnic Georgian refugees from Dikhazurga watched their village burn from a safe distance from Georgian-held territory.

"The Abkhaz are ethnically cleansing our village so that we never come back," said resident Givi Eteria.

Senior Georgian officials said all units had been ordered to stop fighting and pull out of the battle zone.

Tbilisi has said guerrillas which it does not control were involved in fighting on the Georgian side.

But Interior Minister Kakha Targamadze said in a television interview Tuesday that a "small contingent" of Georgian interior ministry troops was at the frontline and had been ordered to pull back.

Foreign Minister Irakli Menegashvili said the sides had agreed overnight in the Abkhaz resort of Gagra to stop all of the fighting by 0200 GMT and start withdrawing armed units three hours later.

Mr. Menegashvili later blamed Abkhaz fighters for breaking the ceasefire in what he described as a "large-scale provocation."

Russia's Interfax news agency quoted Abkhaz interior ministry officials as

blaming Georgians for attacking their positions in the morning.

Abkhazia broke away from Georgia in 1992, triggering a civil war that killed some 10,000 people in the former Soviet Republic. Since then, it has enjoyed de facto independence, but remains unrecognised by the outside world.

Violence flared again earlier this month in the security zone which straddles the de facto border between Georgia and Abkhazia. President Eduard Shevardnadze said Monday about 30,000 people had fled their homes.

Most of Abkhazia's ethnic Georgians, once about half the region's population, were driven out along with Georgian troops during the war five years ago.

Residents have set up defence units and guerrilla groups which have staged attacks on Abkhaz targets and Russian peacekeepers, who they say have failed to protect civilians.

Many of the refugees are furious with Mr. Shevardnadze and his government, saying they failed to provide any support.

Georgia, celebrating its independence day holiday, cancelled a military parade in the capital Tbilisi because of events in Abkhazia.

White Australia says 'sorry' to stolen Aborigine children

SYDNEY (AFP) — Prime Minister John Howard refused Tuesday to join a million Australians in apologising to Aborigines for the tens of thousands of children forcibly separated from their parents over several generations.

Church bells rang around the country as thousands flocked to the first annual National Sorry Day ceremonies and church services.

The Aboriginal flag flew from the national parliament in Canberra. More than one million people were estimated to have signed "sorry books" in the lead up to the commemorative day, which marks the first anniversary of release of a report on the so-called "stolen generations."

Roman Catholic leaders asked Aborigines for forgiveness. New South Wales Governor Gordon Samuels called on Australians to acknowledge past wrongs and influential Victorian state Premier Jeff Kennett said: "Yes, we can say sorry and mean it."

But Mr. Howard steadfastly refused to make a formal apology on behalf of governments responsible for the hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal children torn from families for a century up to late 1960s.

Many of the children still bear the scars of the physical, sexual and psychological abuse which

the Human Rights Commission report found they suffered in the white institutions and foster homes they were sent to.

"Although in a personal sense many Australians will feel sorrow and regret in relation to past injustices suffered by sections of the Australian community, it is the view of my government that a formal national apology, of the type sought by others, is not appropriate," Mr. Howard told parliament.

The government believed that the most appropriate way to help the 300,000 or so Aborigine community was to address their disadvantage in areas of health, housing and education, he said.

The Labour opposition and smaller parties condemned the government stance as a national embarrassment.

"If you are a person who has become aware of a great injustice and that you are part of a process which has assisted in producing those injustices it's a pretty poor, weak character who can't actually come out and say 'sorry'," opposition leader Kim Beazley said.

He also warned that the goal of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians was slipping away under the Howard government.

But Sir Ronald Wilson, Human Rights Commission president and

co-author of the report of the stolen children, said it did not matter whether the Howard government was represented at any Sorry Day celebrations.

It would not deter the movement for reconciliation which had sprung up among the people, said Mr. Wilson who proposed National Sorry Day as part of the process of Aboriginal reconciliation.

Aboriginal elder Elizabeth King of the Dhauri-Wurrong people said there would never be reconciliation until such time as Mr. Howard showed some leadership by apologising.

"It's an absolute disgrace and national embarrassment that the prime minister has refused to say sorry," she said. "There are many people like me who suffered horrendously under this brutal regime and who still have to live in appalling conditions."

The media was divided over the issue. Rupert Murdoch's flagship, The Australian, argued that reconciliation needs sorrow and forgiveness, adding that in saying sorry, Mr. Howard "would be giving the gift of an official expression of regret that something evil happened."

But its sister paper, the Daily Telegraph said Mr. Howard's stance "was right."

Organisers of National Sorry Day hoped it would become an annual holiday.

Australia takes aim at Asian sex slave trade

CANBERRA (R) — Australia plans to introduce tough new laws carrying 20-year jail terms to stem a flourishing sex-slave trade which brings Asian women into the country to work as prostitutes.

"There has been some suggestion of a growing international trade in sex slaves, particularly from Southeast Asia," Justice Minister Amanda Vanstone said Tuesday in announcing the drafting of the new laws.

"In many cases, women are brought into the country illegally, believing they will be given legitimate jobs, only to find themselves forced to work in slavery or servitude to repay debts to their 'sponsors'," Ms. Vanstone said.

The sex-slave industry is growing in Australia because legal deterrents are few and profits high, said a briefing paper released by Mr. Vanstone's office.

The movements of enslaved women are restricted and they are often prevented from leav-

ing the house or brothel in which they are kept. They also fear going to police because they have no immigration papers, the paper said.

It said one Thai woman was introduced in Bangkok to a man who told her he could find her a waitress job in Sydney and that he would arrange all her travel and accommodation costs.

However when she landed in Australia, her passport was taken from her and she was brought to a brothel where she was told she had to pay the owners \$15,000.

The women duped into sexual slavery are usually in their early twenties, but they are sometimes in their teens.

In June 1995, a 13-year-old Thai girl was found working in a Sydney brothel. The girl was one of about 300 indebted Thai women working as sex slaves in Sydney brothels.

The women mostly came from Southeast Asia, with their movements from Asia into Australia arranged by

international crime syndicates, the briefing paper said.

Prostitution rings provide drug traffickers with finance and criminal connections and the movement of women and their escorts made transporting the drugs easier, it said.

Australia has not dealt with laws against slavery since former colonial master Britain outlawed the practice both in Britain and its territories more than 150 years ago.

The punishment stands at 14 years' transportation to Australia or imprisonment with hard labour. Australia originated as a British penal colony.

"Essentially, Australia doesn't have laws at the moment to outlaw (sex) slavery," a spokesman for Ms. Vanstone told Reuters.

Under the new laws, forcing people into servitude, obtaining sex slaves through deception, or participating in slave trading would be specified as illegal and carry prison terms of up to 20 years in jail.



Overcoming Philippine president Fidel V. Ramos (left) and his wife, Imelda, board a presidential yacht in Manila for a presidential race with the biggest prize (Reuters photo)

Hong Kong leans more democratic

HONG KONG (AFP) — The Hong Kong leader, Tung Chee-hwa, has rejected the idea of a "one person, one vote" system for the territory's 1997 handover to China, saying it would be a "disaster" for the city.

Mr. Tung said the current system, which allows a small group of people to elect members of the Legislative Council, was "the best" for Hong Kong.

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Russia ready to discuss, but needs

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin said Tuesday that Russia was ready to discuss the issue of nuclear disarmament, but that it needed more information.

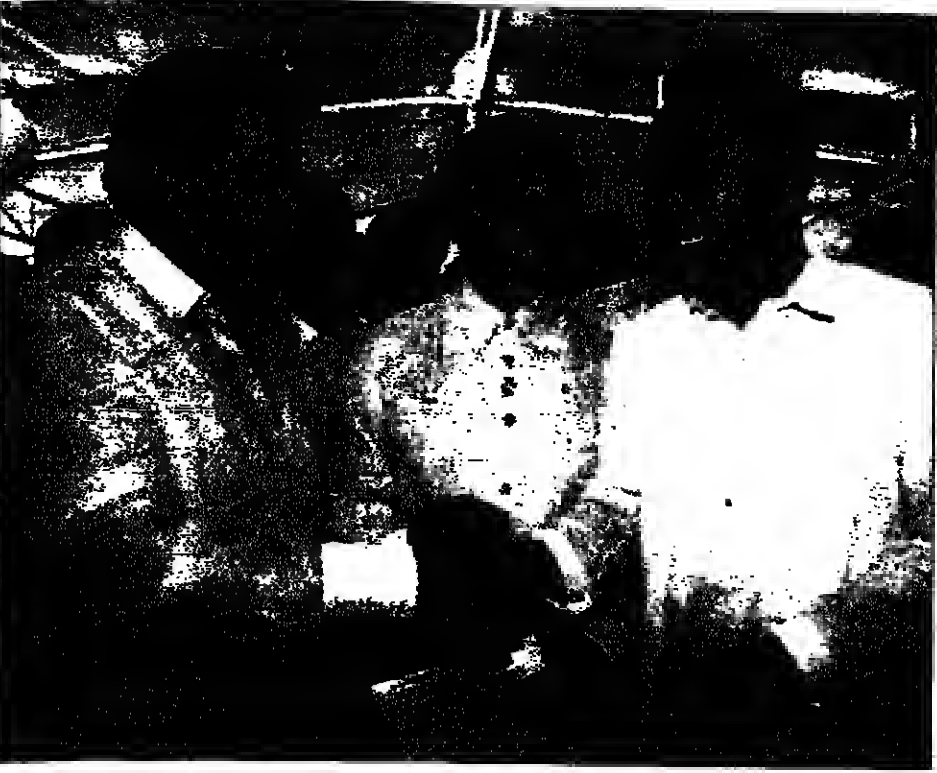
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India planned nuclear

DELHI (AFP) — Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said Tuesday that India was planning to conduct a nuclear test, but that it was not a "pre-emptive" strike.



Outgoing Philippine president Fidel Ramos (centre) joins hands with President-elect Joseph Estrada (left) and administration candidate Jose de Venecia during a meeting aboard a presidential yacht in Manila. Estrada, an ex-actor, beat his rivals in the May 11 presidential race with the biggest number of votes in the history of Philippine elections (Reuters photo)

Ramos and ally admit defeat in Philippines presidential election

MANILA (AFP) — President Fidel Ramos and his protégé Jose de Venecia admitted Tuesday that rival in an unofficial count Mr. Joseph Estrada had won the Philippines presidential election but the trio would form a "government of national unity."

Mr. Ramos twice called Mr. Estrada "president elect" after a breakfast meeting between the three on the presidential yacht Ang Pangulo.

After the meeting Mr. Ramos read a statement saying the election adversaries now considered themselves allies.

The trio "forged an agreement in principle to form a government of national unity to enable the country to move forward confidently and perform successfully in the arena of international competition," the statement

said. The winner of the May 11 presidential election has not been officially declared but in an unofficial count Mr. Estrada, the sitting vice president, has a lead of 5.7 million votes over house speaker Mr. de Venecia.

The final result is not expected before June 12. Mr. Ramos must stand down on June 30 after six years in office.

Mr. Ramos, Mr. de Venecia and Mr. Estrada agreed that the "adversaries in the last election must now look upon themselves not as political enemies but as friends and allies working for the common good of the Filipino people," the statement said.

The three were looking into a possible "working coalition in Congress" that will "respond aggressively

to the needs of economic recovery and development and social equity," it added.

Mr. Ramos said he had designated Mr. de Venecia and another official to meet Mr. Estrada's aides to draft a "compact" between Mr. Ramos' Lakas (Strength) party and Mr. Estrada's party, the Struggle for the Nationalist Masses of the Philippines (Lammp).

Mr. Estrada is a former movie star with a reputation as a womaniser and hard drinker, which had worried many people.

But Mr. Estrada told reporters he was "very glad" the meeting took place and repeated a pledge to make Mr. Ramos his "principal guru and adviser."

He said he was surprised when he arrived at the meeting and saw Mr. de Venecia was present but added that

this was "proof of our president that he is sincere" in seeking a smooth transition.

Mr. Estrada said the Congress coalition between Lakas and Lammp was "kind of a power-sharing" framework but added that "I'm still in command. I'm the captain of the ship. The power emanates from me. They will just help me."

Mr. Ramos said the pact would include "prioritisation of new legislative measures."

Mr. Ramos and Mr. Estrada would soon jointly go through an "orientation" with the defence department on security matters including an ambitious \$3.162-billion-peso (\$5.5-billion) military modernisation programme, the outgoing head of state added.

Lakas is widely expected

to retain a majority of seats in the lower house of congress. Forging a coalition would allow Mr. Estrada to get laws passed faster.

Mr. Estrada said he would likely offer the likely winning vice-presidential candidate, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, a member of Lakas, a post as his social welfare secretary when they meet later Tuesday.

The president and vice-president are elected separately. Mr. Arroyo, a senator, has a huge lead in unofficial vote counts over the Lammp candidate.

Meanwhile, Congress, which was scheduled to start the official tally from vote counting Tuesday, decided to delay the count for another day because they are still occupied with approving the rules for vote-counting.

Hong Kong leader rejects calls for more democracy after elections

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong leader Tung Chee-Hwa has rejected demands for greater democracy in the territory following the resurgence of democratic parties in the territory's first election under Chinese rule.

The chief executive, reacting to a growing chorus of calls for universal suffrage following Sunday's elections, said the government would stick to its plans for gradual political reform.

The democratic camp, kicked unceremoniously out of power at the end of British rule last July, stormed back into the legislature at the polls, winning around two-thirds of the popular vote.

However, under the labyrinthine electoral system, this translated into only around a third of the seats on the 60-member legislature.

"The election has laid a solid foundation for political development in the SAR (Special Administrative Region)," Tung said late Monday.

"The government will resolutely move forward to a more democratic form of government in accordance with the provisions in the Basic Law."

"Hong Kong's mini-constitution promises progressively more democracy over the next decade. However there is no firm timetable for complete

universal suffrage.

The leader of the democratic camp, Martin Lee, who was voted back into the chamber after a year in the political wilderness, is championing the calls for more democracy.

"I think it is time for Hong Kong to go forward so China can also go forward," Mr. Lee, the chairman of the Democratic Party, told the Foreign Correspondents Club Tuesday.

"If Hong Kong is to develop at all, we must amend the restricted provision of the Basic Law. Otherwise we can't develop in meaningful way," Mr. Lee said.

"It is wrong for people to look for excuses for China. I think we should push China forward because China is certainly ready," said Mr. Lee, a long-time critic of Beijing.

Mr. Lee, whose Democrats are the largest single party in the new look legislature, insisted that the results and the record 53 per cent turnout at the polls showed the public wanted greater democracy. He has vowed to fight for completely open elections by 2000.

"Clearly what most people in Hong Kong expect him (Tung) to do, or would like him to do, is to heed public demand for more democracy," said Mr. Lee.

However, the new assembly will still be dominated by pro-

Beijing and pro-business candidates, who dominate the indirectly-elected seats.

Mr. Tung adviser Yang Ti-Liang, a former chief justice, warned that amending the Basic Law "is a very serious task."

Leung Chun-Ying, another of Tung's executive councilors, spelled out the only path for change that he saw.

"If there is a wish for the formation of the Legislative Council to be changed then it is up to a two-thirds majority of the Legislative Council at that time, and the chief executive agreeing."

"This is part of our constitution," said Mr. Leung.

The Democratic Party emerged as the biggest single party in the new legislative council, with 13 seats, though the electoral system devised by the government meant it could not win a majority.

Mr. Lee's jubilant party celebrated its return to the political mainstream after the final results were announced Monday.

Mr. Lee has been branded a subversive by Beijing, which has given a muted reaction to the election result.

The official Chinese media reported the record turnout but did not mention the success of the Democrats, who say the electoral system was devised by Beijing to prevent them from wielding power.

Death toll in China floods climbs past 100

BEIJING (AFP) — Heavy summer flooding across China has claimed more than 100 lives and the toll threatens to climb as the El Niño weather phenomenon takes grip, officials said Tuesday.

Fifteen died in torrential rainstorms in the southern province of Guangdong last weekend, and 10 died when two days of heavy rains hit the southwestern province of Sichuan last week. Two flooding incidents in the central province of Hubei have also left eight dead, local officials contacted by telephone said.

Chinese officials have warned the influence of the El Niño weather phenomenon could bring more severe floods than usual this year, after last year's relatively low death toll of 600.

"Sustained heavy rain may hit areas along the Yangtze River and Yellow River and there is a possibility of a large-scale catastrophic flood this year," Xinhua quoted a vice minister of water resources as saying.

As waters from the heavy rains in southern China subsided, the Guangdong Flood Control bureau said six people had died in the towns of Xinhui and Sihui while another four were missing. The death toll in the boom city of Shenzhen was seven and two died in the city of Zhaoqing.

"Maoming and Zhaoqing were the worst hit with 412 millimetres of rainfall and have recorded losses of at least 70 million yuan (\$8.4 million)," a spokesman said.

"In Maoming, 12 reservoirs flooded, there were 68 breaches of dams and 28

dykes collapsed, but there were no deaths," he said.

The storms in Sichuan province dumped 314mm of rain amid gale-force wind which left 10 people dead, four missing, and 38 seriously injured. They also destroyed more than 2,500 houses as well as roads and bridges, and inundated more than 3,000 hectares of farmland, with economic losses of more than 150 million yuan (\$18 million). Earlier in the month, nine people were killed in flooding in the same province.

In Hubei province, the death toll rose to eight from two separate floods.

In the first, from May 20 to 22, three people died, with 340,000 people in 18 cities affected and 50,000 hectares of farmland flooded. In the second, five people were swept away and drowned in the city of Xiangfan on May 25.

Summer flooding has come two months early in a large swathe across southern China and the southern provinces of Guangdong, Jiangxi, Hunan, Fujian and Zhejiang have received four times the normal seasonal amount of rain.

The official death toll from Hunan is 30, with 11 dead in Fujian. Not even the semi-arid northwestern regions of Xinjiang and Gansu have been spared as torrential rains there have left at least 30 dead, bringing the total flood deaths in May to 113 so far.

Last year, which was a relatively light year for flooding, some 600 people died, but back in 1996, more than 3,000 died, economic damage was estimated at 220 billion yuan (\$26.5 billion) and one-third of China's farmland was affected.

China 'gravely concerned' over Japanese slip on defence guidelines

BEIJING (AFP) — China Tuesday expressed "grave concern" over a Japanese foreign ministry official's remarks that recently revised U.S.-Japanese defence guidelines cover a geographical area including Taiwan.

Toshiyuki Takano, director general of the ministry's North American Affairs Bureau, told Japan's parliament that the zone encompassed by the guidelines — which Tokyo has steadfastly refused to specify — includes the Far East and therefore Taiwan.

"We hereby express our grave concern over the remarks made by an official from Japan's foreign ministry and our strong indignation at the move by the Japanese side of wanton interference in China's internal affairs," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao told reporters.

"The Chinese side has made solemn representations to the Japanese side and asked the Japanese government to make an explicit clarification and explanation," he said.

Japan has assured China on many occasions that the guidelines for U.S.-Japanese security cooperation are neither based on a geographical concept nor aimed at any third country, he said.

But Friday's remarks "are not only in contradiction with the commitments and explanations the Japanese

side has made to the Chinese side but also in obvious violation of the principles of the Sino-Japanese joint statement," Mr. Zhu said.

Washington and Tokyo signed revised military guidelines on mutual logistics support at the end of last month.

The Tokyo government at the same time approved three bills to legalise such support, which includes the supply of fuel and the transport of soldiers by Japan for U.S. forces in "areas surrounding Japan" when the latter's peace and security is threatened.

China, fearing that the eruption of military conflict between the mainland and Taiwan would satisfy this condition, has repeatedly protested the guidelines by saying they sanction joint U.S.-Japanese military interference in its internal affairs.

Interference in the Taiwan question suggested by Mr. Takano is "absolutely unacceptable," Mr. Zhu said.

Earlier in the day, Tokyo appeared to take damage-control measures over the remarks, with its defence chief, Fumio Kyuma, branding them as "totally inaccurate."

"It's extremely inaccurate to argue whether or not the guidelines surpass a vague area," said Kyuma, who is director general of the national defence agency.

The official China Daily

blasted Mr. Takano's remarks, saying: "Japanese leaders once assured China that the U.S.-Japanese military alliance would not menace the security of China and would be in accord with the 'one China' policy."

"However, China's worries have become reality: Takano ... has finally dared to voice what some Japanese officials have apparently had in mind for a long time — to include Taiwan in the U.S.-Japan defence guidelines," the editorial said.

A Japanese cabinet official infuriated China last August by admitting in a television interview that the guidelines call for Japan to provide logistical support in the event of U.S. military involvement in a China-Taiwan conflict.

Tokyo has carefully controlled its public statements ever since, insisting that the guidelines were no threat to neighbouring countries.

Taiwan, which calls itself the Republic of China, has been ruled separately since the end of a civil war in 1949, when defeated nationalist forces fled there to set up a non-Communist enclave.

Beijing views the island as a renegade province and requires its diplomatic partners to recognise that it is the only legitimate government of China — a condition it labels the "one China" policy.

Russia ready to scrap all old nuclear subs, but needs credits — Yeltsin

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia is ready to scrap all its rusting nuclear submarines in the Arctic north if Norway provides credits for dismantling them, President Boris Yeltsin said Tuesday, quoted by ITAR-TASS news agency.

"We don't need (old) submarines at all. We can remove the old nuclear submarines from the entire Barents region and declare it a safety zone," Mr. Yeltsin said after talks here with King Harald V of Norway.

"Our north is really full of nuclear things, and it's not for nothing that Norway is so concerned about this. The financial question needs to be settled. If it is settled in the form of credits from Norway, we will immediately start dismantling the submarines."

However, Mr. Yeltsin said "some technical preparation" was needed before beginning the dismantling operation.

The Kola Peninsula, which borders on Norway, was the base of the Soviet Northern Fleet during the cold war, but since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 drastic defence cuts have deprived Russia of the funds needed to scrap the ageing nuclear submarines.

Russia and Norway signed three bilateral accords Tuesday, including one to improve environmental safety in connection with the use of nuclear submarines in the far north.

Under the accord, Norway has earmarked 200-250 million kroner (\$27-\$33 million) over three to four years for projects to improve nuclear safety in the Kola Peninsula.

The projects include disposal of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste, notably from Russia's nuclear submarines, which environmentalists say pose a serious radiation threat.

Increased cooperation to

ensure safety at the Kola nuclear power plant is also covered by the deal.

The environmental threat in the region was highlighted by the Norwegian environmental group Bellona, which reported that the region has a mountain of nuclear waste, comprising 29,040 fuel elements, nine reactor cores and 21,067 cubic metres of solid-fuel nuclear waste.

Earlier this month, a Russian official report voiced alarm at the situation in the Andreyev Bay area, just 40 kilometres from the Norwegian border, used by Russia as a dumping ground for nuclear waste.

Some 95 submarines have been decommissioned and dumped at the site and demand constant and costly work to keep them from deteriorating dangerously, said the report.

It was possible that one of the decommissioned nuclear submarines could sink, it added.

'E. Timor resistance leader to be released'

LISBON (AFP) — Nobel laureate Jose Ramos-Horta has predicted that the East Timor independence fighter, Xanana Gusmao, would be freed by August from detention in Indonesia, the Portuguese news agency Lusa said Tuesday.

Mr. Ramos-Horta told the agency that it would be a "politically untenable" move to keep Mr. Gusmao in prison and predicted that he could be freed by August.

Mr. Gusmao is currently held in the Cipinang prison near Jakarta, where he began serving a 20-year sentence in 1994.

"I do not think that the new Indonesian government, which seeks consolidation and credibility through reform, can afford the luxury" of keeping Mr. Gusmao behind bars, he said.

Mr. Ramos-Horta, a Nobel Peace Prize-winner who now lives in exile, warned that failure to free Mr. Gusmao within the coming months would put the issue of East Timor on the agenda for a summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in South Africa, to be hosted by President Nelson Mandela in August.

Mr. Ramos-Horta recently called upon Mandela to intervene over the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, which was invaded and annexed by Indonesia in 1976.

But Mr. Gusmao was less optimistic about his release when interviewed by journalists Sunday. He said he did not expect a quick release, and stressed that he would not accept an amnesty because this "would imply a pardon."

'India planned nuclear tests 15 years ago'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Former Indian president K. Venkatarman said Tuesday that New Delhi had planned to test nuclear weapons 15 years ago but shelved it under international pressure.

"All preparations for an underground nuclear test at Pokhran had been completed in 1983 when I was the defence minister. It was shelved because of international pressure and the same thing happened in 1995."

"I went down to the shaft to see things for myself," Mr. Venkatarman added in an open letter to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee hailing the five underground nuclear tests on May 11 and 13 at Pokhran.

Mr. Venkatarman said Mr. Vajpayee had "enhanced the prestige of India among the world community and proved India's technological excellence to the developed countries" by conducting the nuclear tests.

"Prime ministers are a dime-

a-dozen and come and go unnoticed, unwept and unsung. But you will remain indelible in the nation's memory," he added.

The tests have been widely hailed within the country but have drawn criticism across the world.

Mr. Venkatarman was the president of India for five years until July 1992. He was defence minister in 1982-84 in the government of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Hong Kong closes last Vietnamese boat people camp

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong Tuesday closed its last Vietnamese boat people camp, bringing to an end the long saga of asylum-seekers from the Communist country.

The High Island detention centre was closed after the final two groups of 267 Vietnamese, deemed economically migrants and therefore ineligible for resettlement, were deported back to Hanoi, a government spokesman said.

Sally Wong, deputy security secretary, said the closing of the detention centre in New Territories was "a landmark achievement in the final chapter of the whole Vietnamese boat people saga."

The groups of Vietnamese sent home Tuesday comprised 265 illegal immigrants and two boatpeople. Most of them had arrived in Hong Kong in 1997.

Ms. Wong said the remaining 32 Vietnamese illegal immigrants in the camp have been transferred to other correctional institutions.

The north camp of High Island detention centre was

closed in January this year when the Vietnamese population in the camp dropped to about 900.

Only two sections in the south camp and a security unit have remained in operation since then. The closure of the whole centre will result in a savings of some 60 million Hong Kong dollars (\$7.8 million) per year.

The Vietnamese population in Hong Kong has dropped to about 1,150 Vietnamese refugees, 660 Vietnamese boat people, and 350 Vietnamese illegal immigrants, said Ms. Wong.

Some 143,500 Vietnamese refugees have been resettled overseas, and more than 70,000 non-refugees — including some 67,100 Vietnamese boat people and 2,900 illegal immigrants — have been repatriated to Vietnam, she said.

The government will continue with its best effort to bring the remaining problem of Vietnamese refugees, boatpeople or illegal immigrants in Hong Kong to "a full and satisfac-

tory conclusion," Ms. Wong said.

Before Hong Kong was handed over to China on July 1 last year, Beijing demanded Britain clear the territory of the illegal Vietnamese.

Over 200,000 Vietnamese have fled to Hong Kong in 1975. At its height in October 1991, there were over 64,300 asylum-seekers kept in cramped, closed detention centres throughout the territory.

The "Vietnamese problem" was exacerbated by violence in the crowded camps, including ugly scenes of police clashing with asylum-seekers armed with home-made weapons.

The authorities were criticised for using tear gas in a closed compound where women and children had nowhere to escape to.

Residents here have had little sympathy for the Vietnamese, despite the fact that Hong Kong is a largely immigrant community whose citizens, or their parents or grandparents, themselves escaped Communist rule after fleeing mainland China.

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Allow children a childhood

THE MINIMUM age for marriage for both men and women is an issue that divides cultures and religions. That is why the International Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the Convention on the Rights of Women avoided stipulating a particular minimum age for marriage for both sexes. In Jordan, the existing law sets the minimum age for marriage for men at 16 and for women at 15. No wonder that several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) concerned with the rights of the child and women's rights are campaigning vigorously to lift the minimum age of marriage for men and women to 18 years.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as being any person under the age of 18. On the basis of this universally accepted criterion, people under the age of 18 are simply children who are neither physically nor psychologically ready to enter into a solemn contract of marriage. Recently, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights debated this issue, taking into consideration a Sri Lankan state report. The Sri Lankan delegation informed the committee that there are two different minimum ages for marriage in the country: one for Muslims and the other for non-Muslims. It turned out that in Sri Lanka, Muslim girls can marry at the age of 12 but non-Muslim girls may not marry before the age 16.

This led the committee to raise the entire issue of the minimum age for marriage after informing the Sri Lankan delegation that there must be no differentiation between religions when it comes to a minimum age for marriage. Islam per se, the delegation was told, does not condone marriage for very young girls. The fact of the matter is that most Muslim nations have raised the minimum age for marriage for girls to 16 and some even to 18. Recent reports by the World Health Organisation (WHO) confirm that early marriages for women take a heavy toll on their health, the health of their children and deprive the young mothers of basic education.

While WHO refrains from prescribing a certain minimum age for marriage, the thrust of its recommendations point to a minimum age of 18 for women. By the same token, if women should not marry before the age of 18, it goes without saying that men too must abstain from entering into marriage before an age that would allow them to have finished their schooling and matured enough to cope with the responsibilities of marriage and the bringing up of children.

The difficulty in setting a universal standard for a minimum age for marriage is that even some Western and advanced countries allow girls to marry at the age of 16 under certain circumstances. By and large the majority of nations have put the minimum age for girls at 16. Yet the trend is clear in favour of 18 as a minimum age. Jordan is in the process of submitting its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Jordanian NGOs are also engaged in preparing their own report for the same purpose. The Committee on the Rights of the Child is expected to consider the state report of Jordan as well as the national Jordanian NGOs report by the end of 1999. This delayed consideration of our official and non-official reports offers all of us a unique opportunity to amend the minimum age for marriage in the country to 18 in conformity with the international trend.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan said the Arab countries must adopt a collective stand equal to the level of defiance manifested by Benjamin Netanyahu and in a manner that would force him to give up his arrogance. The writer said the French-Egyptian call for an international conference to deal with the Middle East issue reflects the Arab and European admission that the peace process is dead and that something has to be done to address the new situation in the region. If the Arabs gather at a mini summit designed only to send an appeal to Washington to save the peace process, their action will be futile and could further increase Netanyahu's intransigence, said the writer. He said the Arabs should take steps first to lift the embargo on Iraq and Libya and then muster all their power militarily and economically to confront Israel and its arrogance and bring an end to Israel's occupation of Arab lands.

Al Dustour's Hilmi Al Asmar said calls for convening a national conference to deal with the question of unemployment by no means absolve the government from its responsibilities. Convening such a conference means involving all sectors in the process of finding solutions to the problem, but the conference and its resolutions or recommendations will be meaningless unless the government takes steps to put them into practice, said the writer. From now and until such a conference has been convened, he said, the government should pursue efforts towards replacing guest workers with Jordanian job seekers by all possible means and should strictly apply laws and regulations that are meant to organise the local labour market. He said the convening of a national conference to deal with unemployment is certain to increase the government's responsibilities, but at the same time the conference's resolutions would help it to deal with this crisis in a more effective manner.

Washington Watch

The religious right — a force to reckon with

Dr. James J. Zogby

AS POLITICAL activists in both parties are laying plans for the 1998 congressional elections, and almost 20 national Republican and Democratic leaders are touring the country positioning themselves for the 2000 presidential elections, a core group of religious conservative organisations are instead focusing their efforts on taking control of the Republican Party.

For almost two decades, the religious right has been a significant force in Republican politics. Ushered onto the national scene with the Reagan victory of 1980, this movement received an organisational boost with the 1988 presidential campaign of Pat Robertson. Based on this experience, Robertson, a television preacher, founded the Christian Coalition. During the past 10 years his group, its off-shoots and related organisations have waged a successful grass roots campaign that has resulted in their takeover of more than one-third of the Republican party's state organisations. The religious right wing now has the power to define the Republican Party agenda.

One political analyst recently noted that "the religious right has now become to the Republicans what the labour unions were to the Democrats." In fact, they are so influential among the grass roots activists of the party that it has become accepted political wisdom that without their support a Republican cannot win that party's presidential nomination.

This was evident in 1996 as front-runner Bob Dole shocked Washington's political elite by changing many of his long-standing political positions on critical issues (abortion, gun control, welfare, immigration and the Middle East) in order to win the religious conservative's support for his nomination. As the Dole transformation demonstrated, the traditional moderate Republican Party of George Bush, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon and Dwight Eisenhower had been taken over by fundamentalists who seek to impose their morality and politics on the nation and the world. Despite his conversion during the 1996 primaries, Dole disappointed the fundamentalist wing of the Republican Party when he failed to make their issues central to his campaign against Bill Clinton.

The religious right is also showing signs of displeasure with the Republican controlled Congress, which they believe was elected in 1994 on the strength of their vote. In recent weeks leaders of the religious right have protested that Congress is only paying lip service to their

moral agenda. They are warning Republicans not to take their support for granted in 1998 or 2000. In fact one prominent fundamentalist leader noted that he would prefer the destruction of the Republican Party to "their present betrayal of the moral agenda." And so as the nation gears up for the November elections, the religious right is manoeuvring to assert its control over the Republican agenda. Signs of an intra-party struggle are apparent everywhere:

1. After leaders of several religious right wing groups threatened to withhold support in the November elections, some leaders of the Republican congressional caucus met with them and pledged support for their agenda. They collectively agreed to form the "Congressional Values Action Team" and to bring up for a vote several resolutions supported by the religious groups.

Should these bills be defeated in Congress, the religious right will campaign to defeat those who voted against the legislation.

2. The religious right forced the Republican National Committee to an extended vote on a resolution to deny any party funds and support to any Republican candidate who favours even limited abortion rights.

This resolution was defeated as too extreme but only after the party leadership was forced to so strenuously restate their opposition to abortion that some other Republican officials were offended. One decried the entire effort as "projecting the image of a party giving a veto power to a militant constituency."

3. The forces of the religious right did succeed in passing sweeping legislation that would apply sanctions on countries accused of "violating religious freedoms." The so-called "Religious Persecution Act" was opposed by the White House and moderates who fear that the legislation is narrowly focused and will impede broader U.S. foreign policy objectives.

4. Angry with Dole and Gingrich, whom the religious conservatives accuse of having let them down, these groups have made it publicly clear that their support in 1998 and 2000 must be earned.

While one of the leaders, James Dobson of "Focus on the Family," has threatened to bolt from the Republican Party, which he accuses of "hypocrisy," another, Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council, is threatening to run for president in 2000.

Already two of the leading Republican candidates for 2000 have publicly adopted the fundamentalist agenda. Steve Forbes, who campaigned against these groups in 1996, has had a Dole-like conversion this year. Missouri Senator John Ashcroft, another Republican candidate for the 2000 presidential campaign, has so strongly adopted the religious right's agenda that Pat Robertson has made a substantial contribution to Ashcroft's political action committee.

5. Finally, the strength of the religious right has been visible in the strong Republican displays of support for the Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu.

It was no accident that on a recent visit to the United States Netanyahu first met with the leadership of the religious right.

The ideology of this movement is anti-Arab and quite dangerous. What is of real concern is that this group has merged with the neo-conservatives and pro-Likud forces in the Jewish community to virtually take over the foreign policy of the Republican Party, including its Middle East policy. Moderate Republicans are worried that the growing power of the fundamentalists will weaken their party on the national scene. The control by the religious right will not adversely affect Republicans in congressional elections, but it will have an impact on presidential races. If Republican candidates must adopt the narrow agenda of this movement to win the Republican primary, they become unattractive to voters in November. Republican moderates fear that with the religious right driving moderates away from the Republican Party and forcing independent voters into the Democratic camp, their party is in danger of becoming a minority party of ideological fanatics.

The leaders of the religious right are unfazed by these dire predictions. Like Dobson, they are ideologues who fear surrendering their agenda more than they fear defeat. In fact, Ashcroft said as much two weeks ago when he noted that "Republicans should stand for positions, even if we lose" because of them. At the same time this movement knows that it has significant leverage over the party because of its numbers and grass roots strength. This drama within the Republican Party will continue to play itself out. It deserves to be watched because of its consequences to both American democracy and to American foreign policy.

Waging a frontal assault

By George S. Hishmeh
 Special to the Jordan Times

WASHINGTON — American politicians like their counterparts in Britain traditionally abide by their pledge not to attack their government and engage in partisan politics once, as the British say, they leave Dover Rocks. But this is not the case with the irascible Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, who is leading a bipartisan delegation to Israel on the occasion of the country's 50th anniversary celebrations and the annexation, against international consensus, of Jerusalem. (There are two additional Congressional delegations at present in Israel.)

Two Washington Post reporters, filing separately within the last 48 hours, document the extent of the "deep enmity" between the Democratic administration and a Republican-controlled Congress, "shattering the bipartisan consensus toward the Middle East," over the current struggle to break the 15-month stalemate in the quest for an enduring peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

William Drozdzak reported from Jerusalem last Saturday that some aides of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "were amazed at the willingness of prominent members of Congress, notably...Gingrich to denounce their own government and express support for the leader of a foreign power that receives \$3 billion in U.S. aid each year."

Drozdzak, who is usually based in Berlin, has reported Israeli officials as saying that "Gingrich and members of Congress have urged Netanyahu to go even further than he deems wise or necessary in waging a frontal assault against the Clinton administration and its Middle East policy." Netanyahu was told "he would be backed to the hilt in any

ultimate showdown with Clinton and that the legislators are prepared to do everything in their power to ensure that he wins such a confrontation."

Lee Hockstader, the Jerusalem-based correspondent, reported Monday that the Congressional delegation "spent its first full day in Jerusalem assuring everyone concerned that when it comes to making peace in the Middle East, Congress is on Israel's side, come what may."

The correspondent added, "That message

one billion dollars should the Jewish state withdraw from whatever percent of the occupied West Bank. (Israel was said to be wanting the money to build a network of bypass roads and other security measures throughout the West Bank.)

Why not? After all, the United States had to come up with several billions of dollars to "compensate" the Israelis "when they pulled back their troops from the Sinai Peninsula as a result of the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt. These outrageous Congressional shenan-

Gingrich, who denied he encouraged Netanyahu to take on the White House, nevertheless seemed to be on a spending spree in Israel when he promised to come up with \$1 billion should the Jewish state withdraw from whatever per cent of the occupied West Bank.

is at odds with the Clinton's administration's strategy in recent weeks to intensify pressure on Netanyahu, whom it regards as intransigent and unwilling to compromise with Palestinians."

Hockstader said the 20-man Congressional delegations have two audiences in mind in their outspoken support for Netanyahu. "One is an Israeli domestic audience that seems convinced that no matter what Netanyahu's travails at home, he can play the game of American politics as well as — and perhaps better than, President Clinton himself. The other is the American Jewish community, whose votes and wallets are regarded by both major parties as critical in the 2000 elections."

Gingrich, who denied he encouraged Netanyahu to take on the White House, nevertheless seemed to be on a spending spree in Israel when he promised to come up with

gans give the misconception, certainly in Israel, if not the Arab World, that Congress can alone dictate U.S. foreign policy, and that American Jews are totally supportive of the rightwing government in Israel.

A case in point was Gingrich's planned visit to the proposed site of the new U.S. embassy in Jerusalem, which was nixed by U.S. National Security Adviser Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger. (A historical note: Former U.S. Consul General Ed Abington told a Washington audience recently that the proposed site was offered by Israel, and the U.S. government has not responded in any way about the proposal, not even acknowledging the letter.)

Another was the administration's rebuff of a recent letter signed by the majority of senators and another by about half of the U.S. House of Representatives urging the Clinton

administration not to pressure the Israeli government. Although the Clinton administration has not followed through with its threats it has not yet hacked away from its position for a 13.1 per cent Israeli withdrawal.

Moreover, the Los Angeles Times said earlier this month that "several, recent, opinion polls, including one by the Times, have shown that Clinton enjoys a high level of support among Jews." The paper added, "The polls indicate that a majority of American Jews want the administration to press the peace process even if that means pressuring Netanyahu."

The Israel Policy Forum, a New York-based think tank, said its poll earlier this month showed that American Jews endorsed Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's now-lifted deadline by 52 per cent to 44 per cent, and a higher majority, 56 per cent, endorsed the administration's decision to invite Netanyahu and Palestinian President Arafat to the summit (which was cancelled) in Washington earlier this month.

Another lengthy article in the Boston Globe provided this eyeopener: "A quiet revolution... is under way these days among many of the descendants of those who devoted so much energy to Israel." The paper explained that "the younger generations of American Jews are turning their attention away from the hills of Jerusalem and the fertile fields of the Jezreel Valley and focusing instead on their own communities..."

William F. Buckley, Jr., the arch-conservative writer, may have summed it up when he wrote last week: The future of Israel can be said to be in U.S. hands, but the policies of that (Netanyahu) government should reflect common objectives."

The poor always pay debts of the rich

By Noam Chomsky

THE CURRENT call for international debt cancellation is welcome, but debt does not just go away. Someone pays, and history generally confirms what a rational look at the structure of power would suggest: risks tend to be socialised, just as costs commonly are, in the system mislabelled "free enterprise capitalism."

The old-fashioned idea is that responsibility falls upon those who borrow and lend. Money was not borrowed by campesinos, assembly plant workers, or slum-dwellers. The mass of the population gained little from borrowing, indeed often suffered grievously from its effects. But they are the ones who bear the burdens of repayment, along with tax-payers in the West — not the banks who made bad loans or the economic and military elites who enriched themselves while transferring wealth abroad and taking over the resources of their own countries.

The Latin American debt that reached crisis levels from 1982 would have been sharply reduced by the return of "flight capital" — in some cases, overcome, though all figures are dubious for these secret and often illegal operations. The World Bank estimated that Venezuela's flight capital exceeded its foreign debt by 40 per cent in 1987.

In 1980-82, flight capital reached 70 per cent of borrowing for eight leading debtors, according to estimates. That is a regular pre-collapse phenomenon, which we saw again in Mexico in 1994.

The current International Monetary Fund (IMF) "rescue package" for Indonesia approximates the estimated wealth of the Suharto family. One Indonesian economist estimates that 95 per cent of the country's foreign debt of some \$80 billion is owed by 50 individuals, not the 200 million who end up suffering the costs.

Debt can be and has in the past been cancelled. When Britain, France and Italy defaulted on debts to the United States in the 1930s, Washington "forgave (or forgot)" as the Wall Street

Journal reported. When the U.S. took over Cuba 100 years ago it cancelled Cuba's debt to Spain on the grounds that the burden was "imposed upon the people of Cuba without their consent and by force of arms." Such debts were later called "odious debt" by legal scholarship, "not an obligation for the nation" but "the debt of the power that has incurred it," while the creditors who "have committed a hostile act with regard to the people" can expect no payment from the victims.

When Britain challenged Costa Rica's attempts to cancel the debt of the former dictator to the Royal Bank of Canada, the arbitrator — U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Howard Taft — concluded that the bank lent the money for no legitimate use, so its claim for payment must fail. The logic extends readily to much of today's debt.

In the 1970s, the World Bank actively promoted borrowing. "There is no general problem of developing countries being able to service debt," the bank announced authoritatively in 1978.

Weeks before Mexico defaulted in 1982 a joint publication of the IMF and the World Bank declared that "there is still considerable scope for sustained additional borrowing to increase productive capacity."

The record continues to the present. Mexico was hailed as a free market triumph and a model for others until its economy collapsed in December 1994, with tragic consequences for most Mexicans.

Shortly before the Asian financial crisis erupted in 1997, the World Bank and IMF praised the "sound macroeconomic policies" and enviable fiscal record of Thailand and South Korea.

A 1997 World Bank report singled out the "particularly intense" progress of "the most dynamic emerging (capital) markets," namely Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand, with Indonesia and the Philippines not far behind. The report appeared as the fairy tales collapsed.

Failure of prediction is no sin, but it is hard to overlook the argu-

ment that economist Paul Krugman put: "Bad ideas flourish because they are in the interest of powerful groups."

Over the centuries, free market theory has been double-edged: Market discipline is just fine for the poor and defenceless, but the rich and powerful take shelter under the wings of the nanny state.

Another factor in the debt crisis was the liberalisation of financial flows from the early 1970s. The post-war Bretton Woods system, designed by the U.S. and U.K. to liberalise trade while regulating capital movements, was dismantled by the Nixon administration. This was a major factor in the enormous explosion of capital flows in the years that followed. In 1970, 90 per cent of transactions were related to trade and long-term investment, the rest were speculative. By 1995 it was estimated that 95 per cent of transactions were speculative, most of them very short-term (80 per cent with a return time of a week or less).

Markets have become more volatile, with more frequent crises. For the past 25 years, growth and productivity rates have declined significantly. In the U.S., wages and income have stagnated or declined for the majority while the top few per cent have gained enormously. By now the U.S. has the worst record among the industrial countries by standard social indicators. England follows closely, and similar though less extreme effects can be found throughout the OECD.

The effects have been far more grim in the Third World. Comparison of East Asia with Latin America is illuminating. Latin America has the world's worst record for inequality, East Asia ranks among the best.

Debt is a social and ideological construct, not a simple economic fact. Furthermore, liberalisation of capital flow serves as a powerful weapon against social justice and democracy. Recent policy decisions are choices by the powerful, based on perceived self-interest, not mysterious economic laws.

— The Guardian

Jordanian-Moroccan committee discuss draft accord on trade cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian-Moroccan Technical Committee Tuesday discussed a draft agreement on trade cooperation under which the two countries will establish a free trade zone, to be implemented no later than the year 2007 which is the deadline for establishing the Greater Free Trade Zone.

The committee, meeting at the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply under the chairmanship of Suheil Amawi, head of the economic cooperation department at the ministry, and director of the Moroccan Foreign Trade policy department, Allal Rushdi, discussed a draft agreement on export promotion between Jordan's Export Development and Commercial Centres and its Moroccan counterpart.

Ms. Amawi said the two draft agreements will be submitted in their final form to the Joint Higher Jordanian-Moroccan Committee, which will meet in Rabat on June 14. Ms. Amawi said the volume of trade between Jordan and Morocco falls short of expectations, noting that the volume of trade with Morocco is JD5 million, including 1.8 million worth of exports and JD3.8 million worth of imports.

Bahrain reports surplus in 1997 budget, current account

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A surge in oil prices and aluminium exports turned Bahrain's projected 1997 budget deficit into a surplus and swung the balance of payments in its favour, its finance and economy minister has said.

The tiny Gulf island state recorded a budget surplus of 2.2 million Bahraini dinars (\$5.7 million) in 1997 for the second year running although it had forecast a high deficit. Ibrahim Abdul Karim said preliminary estimates of the balance of payments showed there was a surplus in the current account of 57 million dinars (\$148.2 million).

Oil production also rose by 3.8 per cent to 59.4 million barrels last year (162,000 barrels per day), while aluminium output by the state-controlled Alba smelter increased to 495,000 tonnes from 456,000 tonnes in 1996.

The minister put total aluminium sales in 1997 at around 481,000 tonnes, fetching nearly 296 million dinars (\$770 million).

Exports totalled 1.6 billion dinars (\$4.16 billion) and imports around 1.4 billion dinars (\$3.64 billion).

Most of Bahrain's oil production comes from a Saudi border field as the country's own crude reserves are limited.

Japanese economy remains 'stagnant'

TOKYO (AFP) — The Japanese economy remains "stagnant," struggling to pull itself into shape after the nation's unemployment rate hit a record high, the government has said.

"As the (negative) impact of stagnant final demand is spreading across the broad area of economic activity such as production and the labour market, the economy remains stagnant, and downward pressure is increasing," the Economic Planning Agency (EPA) said in its May report.

While leaving its overall economic assessment unchanged, the EPA said the depressed domestic economy had a negative effect on the country's unemployment rate, which in March reached a record high of 3.9 per cent.

Japan's unemployment rate in March jumped from 3.6 per cent in the previous month, the worst showing since the government started compiling the data in 1953.

Given the record high unemployment rate, the agency said in the report that the severity of the labour market "increased further," downgrading its assessment in February when it said such pressure was "increasing."

The agency and ministers shrugged off growing concerns that the economy was falling into a deflationary spiral, pointing to some bright signs in consumer spending.

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Fax: 5153774

THE Daily Crossword by Dorothy B. Martin

ACROSS
1 Cargo thrown overboard
6 Exaggerated
10 Average grade
13 Subside
14 Neighborhood
15 Peel
16 French artist
17 Burden
18 Russian range
19 Inlet of the Pacific
21 Total paid attendance
22 Camera eye
23 Newspaper VIP
25 Prohibited
26 Actor Flynn
31 Young Ron Howard role
32 Naturalness
34 Ross or Rigg
38 Pincers
40 Deterioration
42 Follow
43 Capri, e.g.
45 Faithful
48 Ground grain
49 Concur
50 Remarkable person
53 Concerning
55 Italian money
56 Belligerent
62 English river
63 Continent
64 Cove
65 Gusto
66 Circle
67 Diner
68 Enzyme suffix
69 Labels
70 Restoration, briefly

DOWN
1 Lighting device
2 "— ben Adham"
3 Street group
4 Suits to —
5 Imitate
6 Eagle's weapon
7 Sits up
8 Slender
9 Fireman's need
10 Gem weight
11 Muse of poetry
12 Snuggler
15 Sowers
20 Passover
24 Extinct bird
25 Doggy delight
26 Neat as —
27 Tears
28 Offensive condition
30 Film spool
31 Safe phrase
35 Yorkshire river
36 Nerve word
37 Dill, old style
39 Architect
41 Laffel
44 Theater process
47 Land
49 Field game
50 Public square
51 Lichy skin
52 Having a ragged edge
54 Hindrances
57 Govt. org.
58 Dies —
59 Plague
60 Eye part
61 Certain European

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHERIANI											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 26/05/1998											
PAST 12 MONTH HIGH	PAST 12 MONTH LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRNS.	VALUE TRADED	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
S 355.500	170.000	ARAB BANK	16.8	.98	58	2360	483808	205.00	205.00	-	
2.340	1.620	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	13.6	4.17	16	7774	13059	1.67	1.68	.01+	
1.300	.880	MIO. EAST INV. BK.	63.1	0.00	1	1000	960	.96	.96	-	
S 2.480	1.600	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	11.1	6.40	1	250	405	1.62	1.62	-	
S 6.510	2.840	THE HOUSING BK.	18.6	3.40	51	17470	51433	2.93	2.94	.01+	
S 4.180	1.790	JOR. KUALITY BANK	.9	0.00	1	2000	3780	1.90	1.89	.01-	
S 4.920	.590	JOR. GULF BANK	4.1	10.14	2	1000	690	.69	.69	-	
S 4.020	1.740	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	19.2	0.00	2	5100	9588	1.90	1.88	.02-	
S 3.900	1.450	JOR. INV. FTM. BANK	12.3	6.25	2	250	402	1.62	1.60	.02-	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 275.73	%CHG: +0.03	136	37242	564200				
4.590	2.100	PHILADELPHIA INSUR.	17.3	0.00	1	50	108	2.15	2.15	-	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 121.80	%CHG: 0.00	1	50	108				
2.340	1.620	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.9	5.19	8	1602	3266	2.03	2.04	.01+	
1.550	.970	NATL. PORTFOLIO	41.9	0.00	7	15100	15855	1.05	1.05	-	
.590	.330	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	9	0.00	3	2500	1035	.43	.42	.01-	
S 9.800	5.350	ALRAI	8.5	7.21	1	30	278	5.35	5.55	.20+	
4.500	2.000	ARAB FTEL. INV. EDUC.	10.1	1.37	17	39850	8037	2.02	2.03	.01+	
1.090	.490	SARKA EDUCATION	16.2	0.00	1	500	460	.92	.92	-	
1.830	1.950	UNIFIED CO.	6.7	7.24	1	200	304	1.52	1.52	-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 115.39	%CHG: +0.50	38	59802	102034				
4.450	2.450	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	14.8	4.42	13	25784	64180	2.49	2.49	-	
7.050	5.300	ARAB POTASH CO.	25.8	3.81	6	18800	93458	5.30	5.25	.05-	
11.250	9.270	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	10.0	9.63	2	140	1442	10.38	10.30	.08-	
6.100	4.900	JORDAN TANNING	7.6	8.42	4	115	546	5.00	4.75	.25-	
5.740	3.690	ARAB PHARM. IND.	14.6	3.77	27	7760	41058	5.25	5.30	.05+	
.570	.400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	15.9	0.00	5	3250	1513	.47	.47	-	
1.110	.670	ARAB PAPER CORP. TRD.	25.4	0.00	22	43900	36124	.80	.83	.03+	
.780	.370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	12	8800	3872	.44	.44	-	
2.020	1.140	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	12.3	6.57	15	3450	4047	1.14	1.20	.06+	
S 3.000	.920	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MPAC	49.2	0.00	4	1450	1510	1.04	1.05	.01+	
1.560	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	14.6	4.55	12	6095	8073	1.34	1.32	.02-	
1.520	.880	UNIV. JOON. IND.	13.7	6.98	2	3650	2129	.86	.86	-	
1.500	.650	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	9.0	14.93	15	10950	7264	.66	.67	.01+	
1.520	1.320	NATL. CHLORINE	9.6	7.30	4	28750	39388	1.37	1.37	-	
1.080	.810	JOR. WSN CABLE CO.	12.1	11.63	6	4500	3870	.86	.86	-	
1.310	1.080	KVTL. TORONCO	7.0	5.88	9	150	179	1.19	1.19	-	
1.220	.870	UNION CH. & WEG.	11.0	0.00	1	4000	4400	1.11	1.10	.01-	
.880	.560	JORDAN STREET	9.6	8.14	41	226204	196504	.86	.86	-	
.690	.550	WID. EAST COMPLEX	10.5	0.00	22	24500	13968	.56	.58	.02+	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 101.41	%CHG: -0.35	214	419248	514523				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 180.32	%CHG: -0.06	389	516342	1180864				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 26/05/1998											
N 1.050	.910	EXPORT & FTM. BNC. 75%	17.0	0.00	2	1000	670	.92	.92	-	
N 1.250	1.050	ISLAMIC INSURANCE CO	P	0.00	1	2000	2180	1.15	1.09	.06-	
.530	.340	JOR. TRNS. PAC.	9	0.00	10	25400	1168	.45	.46	.01+	
.620	.360	ARAB FTM. INVEST.	9	0.00	2	5250	2050	.39	.40	.01+	
.780	.610	AL-DAMLIYAH	39.2	0.00	2	4000	2680	.67	.67	-	
.290	.100	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-JENCO	9	0.00	5	8250	910	.11	.12	.01+	
.600	.370	ARAB FOOD & WED.	9	0.00	9	16000	7015	.44	.44	-	
.650	.360	NATL. MUT. ENG. NANTOO	9	0.00	6	13500	5395	.40	.40	-	
.690	.580	NIGEREST PHARM. 90%	9	0.00	5	10000	5210	.63	.62	.01-	
1.660	.860	UNION TORONCO 87.5%	10.4	7.67	5	4000	6030	1.62	1.63	.01+	
.730	.550	RALLY PHARM.	9	0.00	2	1050	704	.67	.67	-	
.430	.240	INDS. ENG.	9	0.00	9	7150	1859	.27	.26	.01-	
.950	.550	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	4	923	586	.65	.64	.01-	
.710	.430	KVTL. TORONCO	9	0.00	9	12280	6845	.55	.57	.02+	
N 950	.470	OPTICAL HEARING 75%	9	0.00	1	250	90	.62	.61	.01-	
N 1.310	1.000	SUTINIDAR	P	0.00	7	3000	3055	1.03	1.01	.02-	
N 1.000	.750	EXHAL. PRLNT CO. 75%	12.2	9.47	1	350	193	.80	.80	-	
GRAND TOTAL			80	114373	57175						

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A project you've been thinking about requires more of your attention than you expected. The good news is that you can save a lot of money if you do it yourself. The bad news is that you have to figure out how, and quickly. No problem. You're up for the challenge.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You've been worried lately, possibly about finances. Now you'll start thinking of more ways to make and save money. If you've got any friends of the Cancerian persuasion, this would be a great evening to get together with them to trade penny-pinching tips.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're a little more interested in practical matters. Be careful if you're doing business with a Cancerian type, however. They will always manage to come out ahead. Go shopping instead. You'll be a little more careful with your money than usual, and that helps.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Somebody wants more of you than you're interested in giving, but you don't want to say anything. Maybe you won't have to. By tonight or tomorrow, conditions will change. Keep watching for your opportunity, then move quickly when it comes.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You'll be most productive early, especially if you've got control of the situation. Later, you'll find things more difficult. If you're being asked to do something you feel uncomfortable about, just hurry and get it finished. Either that, or refuse.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You might feel like the universe is asking you to do a lot of ridiculous things to get from here to there. It's a test of your patience, creativity and persistence. Your life will get easier once you pass, and you will pass. Reward yourself with a nice dinner.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Study the situation at work. If you're not employed, think about what you'd like to be doing. Even if you're retired, you can have another career. It's a way to use your natural talents, and that's good for you in many ways. It keeps you healthy, for one.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The tension is starting to give way to a generally calm feeling. Actually, you're part of the reason around you feel secure. They would thank you for it, if they realized what was happening. Just keep holding the safe space and everybody prospers.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Pay attention to where you're going. If you aren't careful, you could miss your off-ramp. Save shopping for later in the day. You'll be more apt to make a wise decision, especially if this purchase involves taking out a loan or using the household account.

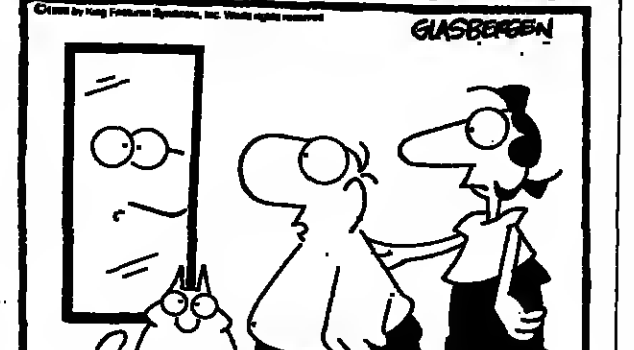
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) It'll be a little easier for you to manage the work if you can get a partner to help. Be looking for somebody to whom you can delegate. You don't have to do everything, all by yourself, even if you think you're the only one who can do it right. Let somebody else help.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Life's been treating you pretty well the last few days. Now it's time to pay your dues. That could be literally as well as figuratively. If you don't get a regular paycheck, do something else that will bring money into your pocket. You've already thought of several good ways to spend it.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'll notice things calming down. That's basically your own heart as it stops fluttering quite so excitedly. People around you have been so nervous, and may still be bundles of energy right now. Well, oo caffeine for them, or for you either.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



"Diet and exercise didn't work. Maybe I should smoke the same cigars as Arnold Schwarzenegger."

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BLONE
O O O O O

LAHCK
O O O O O

YERFIN
O O O O O

DOBENY
O O O O O

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A "O O O O O" (Answer Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: FAITH TOXIC PASTRY COUSIN
Answer: What a mattress salesman looks for — A SOFT TOUCH

Business

Daily
A review of

Suspended interest, widens Union Bank

REUTERS
The Business

Major Currencies & Commodities

Currency	USD	JO	DM	GBP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7091	1.6361	0.6933
SE Mark	0.5452	0.3944	0.9444	0.4644
SE Sterling	1.6254	0.8906	1.9444	0.9444
SE Franc	0.0452	0.0322	0.0644	0.0322
SE Yen	0.0073	0.0052	0.0104	0.0052
SE Dollar	0.5878	0.4244	0.8444	0.4244
SE Euro	0.0004	0.0003	0.0006	0.0003
SE Pound	0.6617	0.4644	0.9444	0.4644
SE Franc	0.0452	0.0322	0.0644	0.0322

Energy

Oil	Last	Review
Crude	14.29	14.37
Gas	14.51	14.76
Coal	14.29	14.37
Gold	12.07	12.40
1 Gas	145.00	146.00

Commodity

Commodity	USD	JO	DM	GBP
SA Soy	0.7091	0.5091	1.2091	0.5091
AE Corn	0.3944	0.2844	0.6944	0.2844
W Wheat	0.9444	0.6844	1.4844	0.6844
W Oil	0.4644	0.3344	0.7644	0.3344
W Sugar	0.9444	0.6844	1.4844	

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Suspended interest, provisions for credit facilities widens Union Bank's loss to JD5.8 million

** UNDER AN agreement reached with the Central Bank, the Union Bank for Savings & Investment has raised the provisions related to credit facilities by JD4.14 million regardless of the type and value of guarantees and securities backing the credits. In addition the Union Bank suspended JD1.19 million of interest due on the aforementioned credits.

As such, the total provisions for credit facilities has become JD9.4 million and the total suspended interest increased to JD2.8 million. Furthermore, the bank sold a large number of shares from its securities portfolio at a loss amounting to JD0.8 million but, in exchange, was able to recoup JD0.6 million of the investments' value.

The net result of the aforementioned measures was the posting of a JD5.88 million loss compared to a JD0.79 loss recorded in 1996. Consequently, the total of the balance sheet contracted by 4.4 per cent, from JD193 million to JD184 million at the end of last year.

Board Chairman Issam Salfiti told the general assembly that the measures were the core of a plan, implemented during the final quarter of 1997, "to reorganise the bank's internal situation." He explained that the provisions should not be considered as real losses because they can be recouped if the loans, for which the provisions were taken, become active or, in other words, shift from a troubled state to a more worthy condition.

He expected to recoup a large percent-

age of the provisions during 1998 and 1999 noting that, despite this loss, the total of the shareholders' equity is still within the normal level and even being eight per cent higher than the bank's registered and paid-up capital. The shareholder's equity stood at JD21.6 million at the end of last year, according to the annual report.

The bank's capital increase, completed before the end of 1997, generated a JD6.8 million issuance premium of this amount, JD3.5 million were allocated as a reserve for opening branches in the West Bank. The rest was kept as an issuance premium. The capital increase also strengthened the bank's financial situation and enabled it to have a 21.03 per cent capital adequacy ratio, much higher than the 12 per cent required by the Central Bank and the eight per cent required by the Basle Committee.

Mr. Salfiti highlighted the investment policy during 1997 by indicating that the bank increased the amounts invested in foreign securities by 33 per cent of the 1996 balance. "As such, the bank achieved two objectives: Entering the international capital market and achieving a suitable return," he said.

The chairman concluded by telling the shareholders that the bank has generated a JD1.1 million profit during the first three months of this year and that JD390,000 profit was made from selling a portion of the bank's equity in Fastlink (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

Jordan Magnesite Company to award \$70m plant project by year-end

AMMAN (R) — Jordan Magnesite Company aims to award a turnkey project to build a \$70 million magnesite oxide plant by the end of the year, company officials said Tuesday.

The firm's chairman Talal Arekat told Reuters the company expected to award the contract of the magnesite oxide plant near the Dead Sea, close to an existing potash complex, "before year-end."

The project has an envisaged production of around 50,000 tonnes annually of high quality magnesite oxide and 10,000 tonnes of specialty products from Dead Sea brine.

The export-oriented plant which will manufacture refractory bricks used in lining of iron smelting and cement factory kilns will target high yield European and Asian markets.

Mr. Arekat said tender documents would be handed by end of May to eight short-listed global consortia from an original 15 firms or groups who bid to pre-qualify for the project last November.

The list of eight shortlisted joint ventures/firms are:

- 1- Voest Alpine Mee (Austria).
- 2- Krebs (France).
- 3- Dragados (Spain) and Consolidated Contractors Int. (Greece).

4- Tractebel Engineering International (Belgium).

5- Samsung (South Korea) and Kvaerner (Norway).

6- Campenon Bernard (France) and Raytheon Engineering (U.S.).

7- Clough Engineering Ltd. (Australia).

8- Agra Monenco (Canada) and Arida Dogan (Turkey).

Construction of the plant which will operate on Austrian-Maerz-Oreobau A.G. Rce technology and the engineering design of Jacobs Engineering Inc. of Ireland is expected to proceed by early next year.

Commissioning target is mid-2000.

The firm was granted a \$28 million capital lease from the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank to part finance the project and is conducting talks for further credit facilities.

Jordan Magnesite Company, set up with a capital of 30 million dinars (\$42 million), is 51 per cent owned by JODICO, a holding company controlled by Arab Potash and Jordanian semi-governmental investors.

JODICO was set up in 1996 to help Jordan diversify downstream joint venture chemical projects to exploit the mineral wealth of the Dead Sea from the current basic production of potash.

JSAA: Inspections cost Jordan \$3m in surcharges, discourage ships from docking at Aqaba

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's Shipping Agents Association (JSAA) said Tuesday it wanted to see an end to four years of U.N.-sponsored ground inspections of Iraqi-bound goods via the Red Sea port of Aqaba, once a main trade conduit for Baghdad.

The JSAA said in its 1997 annual report that inspections were costing Jordan over \$3 million a year in surcharges and were discouraging many ships from docking at Aqaba, a move that dealt a heavy blow to the port's competitive edge.

Jordan, after years of protests over losses incurred by U.S.-led sea inspection of goods bound to Aqaba to enforce U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990, managed to replace maritime inspections with ground searches in Aqaba by Lloyds Register, an international shipping agency, four years ago.

However, many businessmen and traders have complained that ground inspections were only enforced in Jordan, not in Turkey, Syria or Iraq — Iraq's other neighbours.

"In light of all economic and political developments in the region between 1994-1998, the monitoring of goods at Aqaba port has become unjustified and illogical, especially that goods are being inspected on the Jordanian-Iraqi borders (by Jordanian customs officials)," said Sufian Mheisen, executive manager at the JSAA.

"We want to see an end to that," he stressed.

U.N. monitors are supervising the distribution of goods and humanitarian supplies under a limited oil-for-food deal reached in December 1996 to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

Under the deal, which is reviewed every six months, Iraq is allowed to export a fixed amount of crude to import food, medicine and other supplies for its 22 million population.

Jordan, which remains committed to U.N. sanctions on Iraq, inspects goods at the border with Iraq to prevent the exit of contraband goods.

But on many occasions, customs officials have turned a blind eye to Jordanian-made goods entering Iraq to ease the impact of

recession plaguing the Kingdom, traders said.

They said demands by shippers to end Aqaba inspections of Iraqi-bound goods could mean tighter inspection by U.N. monitors on the Iraqi side of the border with Jordan.

"It is a very sensitive issue," said one trader. "It could harm many traders and factories that have succeeded to send goods to Iraq despite winning U.N. authorisation."

However, Mr. Mheisen rejected such charges saying "such arguments were promoted by a handful of people who want inspections at Aqaba to continue."

The U.N. economic ban has dealt Aqaba a fatal blow, cutting transit goods to nearly a half.

Goods destined for Iraq via Aqaba represented five per cent of Aqaba's overall tonnage.

Some 6.9 million tonnes of Iraqi imports passed through Aqaba in 1988 compared to 479,000 tonnes in 1996.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7691	0.6116	1.4692	137.13	1.4540	1744.70	1.9391	5.3366
US Mark	0.5653	1.0000	0.3454	0.8316	77.48	0.8218	985.70	1.1276	3.3543
GB Sterling	1.6354	2.8928	1.0000	2.4048	224.25	2.3779	2851.42	3.2613	9.7017
CH Franc	0.6806	1.2018	0.4153	1.0000	63.22	0.3899	1184.92	1.3852	4.0318
JP Yen	0.0073	1.2886	0.4452	1.0704	1.0000	1.0892	12.70	145.21	4.3228
CA Dollar	0.6878	1.2916	0.4225	1.0566	1.06	1.0000	1270.80	1.4561	4.3265
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0140	0.3603	0.8842	1272.91	0.8334	1.0000	1142	3.3989
NL Guilder	0.5017	0.8856	0.3068	0.7572	68.78	0.7294	874.44	1.0000	2.9747
FR Franc	0.1659	0.2981	0.1030	0.2473	23.65	0.2451	33.60	1.0000	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7506	0.3770	3.6405	0.3060	3.6727	1512.60	3.4026
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2898	0.5317	5.1347	0.4315	5.1801	2133.29	4.7990
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0816	0.88	403.28	0.9072
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9488	1.0000	9.66	0.8116	9.74	4012.15	9.0257
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0302	1.0000	1.00	0.0840	1.01	415.48	0.9346
Kuwait Dinar	3.2695	2.3174	12.2688	1.2322	11.90	1.00	12.00	4943.62	0.9346
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0108	0.9912	0.0833	1.00	411.82	0.9264
Lebanese L1000	0.66	0.4668	2.4797	0.2492	2.4069	0.2023	2.4282	1000.00	2.2496
Egyptian	0.2533	0.2084	1.1023	0.1108	1.0699	0.0899	1.0794	444.53	1.0000

Energy

Oils	Last	Review
Brent	14.29	14.37
W. Texas	14.51	14.76
Bonny	14.29	14.37
Dubai	12.37	12.40
UL Gas	146.00	146.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4716	0.16308	0.392	36.9979
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48188	0.1668	0.4003	37.3734
KW Dinar	3.2685	5.78369	1.9998	4.80538	448.632
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.69484	1.62206	3.90016	364.166
CY Pound	1.9147	3.3874	1.1704	2.6137	262.549

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	296.1	296.6
Silver (oz's)	5.15	5.18
Platinum (oz's)	380	382
AL (3 Months)	1375	1377
CU (3 Months)	1675	1676
Zinc (3 Months)	1047	1061
Lead (3 Months)	566	567
NI (3 Months)	4930	4950

Libor Fixing

Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-1-
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.6641	5.7344	5.8125	5.9331
GBP	7.4375	7.4948	7.4948	7.4948
JPY	0.5728	0.6250	0.6667	0.6979
DEM	3.9015	3.7028	3.8202	4.0234
FRF	3.5313	1.8750	1.9792	2.1146
CHF	1.8333	3.5938	3.6876	3.9063
ITL	5.5380	5.1850	4.8380	1.0000

Main Equity Indices

Bours	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
New York	DOW JONES	9123.65	8.21	0.1	9168.74	8997.5	9114.44
New York	S&P 500	1111.32	0.85	0.08	1116.79	1109.03	1110.47
London	FT-SE 100	6975.5	20.3	0.34	6923.6	6971.6	6965.6
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15884.82	101.7	0.64	15942.2	15788.8	15783.1
Paris	CAC 40	4115.88	7.17	0.17	4146.79	4108.12	4108.71
Frankfurt	DAX	5644.29	68.13	1.24	5684.84	5621.23	5675.16

Egypt exports \$100m worth of goods to Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt exported more than \$100 million worth of goods to Iraq during the six months to March under the U.N. oil-for-food accord, the head of a state-run trading firm said on Tuesday.

Gaballah Abdul Fattah, managing director of Arab Foreign Trade Co. (AFTCO), said Egypt's exports to Iraq reached 350 million pounds (\$103 million) between July 1997 and March 1998, up from 70 million pounds (\$20.6 million) during the 1996-97 fiscal year.

"Food products, namely rice, medicine and detergents were the key exports to Iraq," Mr. Abdul Fattah said.

His company has monopolised trade between Cairo and Baghdad since its foundation in 1964. A subsidiary is located in Iraq and reopened in 1996 after a six-year closure due to the Gulf war.

Egypt severed diplomatic relations with Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait and joined a U.S.-led coalition which expelled Iraqi troops from the emirate.

Cairo has not resumed formal diplomatic ties with Baghdad although relations are improving and trade links were restored in 1996.

Egypt is currently examining a \$150 million contract (\$44 million) to build a refinery with Iraq, Mr. Abdul Fattah said.

"Iraq has always paid its bills. We never had any problems," he said, adding that his company buys products for export from both private and public firms.

"Our only problem stems from the Jordanian decision to

IHDC office in Amman offers to help hotels link with international institutions

By Suha Ma'ayeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The local agent of the International Hotel Development Company (IHDC) said Tuesday he was trying hard to promote Jordanian hotels abroad by linking them to a chain of international institutions.

The Beirut-based IHDC is a major partner of Supranational Hotel Consortium in England, representing 850 hotels in over 300 destinations.

Munther Jweinat, managing director of IHDC office in Jordan that was set up in 1998, said he was helping many local three to five-star hotels market themselves abroad through the international chain in an effort to boost their sales.

The Amman office charges members annual fees in addition to ten per cent on every room booking.

Mr. Jweinat said his bureau also offered a wide range of professional and technical services to Jordanian hotels, starting with the concept of the operation and ending up with the actual launching of the hotel.

He said he will attend all major world tourism

conventions to market local members.

"We want to introduce local hotels to all global distribution systems, international tourist companies, tour operators and airline offices as it is the best opportunity for existing hotels to sell services at the international prices," Mr. Jweinat, 38, said.

He said the rising number of hotels across Jordan since a construction boom fuelled by the 1994 peace treaty with Israel had resulted in tough competition in a limited market that has long shown sensitivity to local political developments.

"This has affected room rates negatively," he added. "Competition also hindered many hotels from maintaining their standard in terms of offering better services to the customers," Mr. Jweinat noted.

"We had to think of an inexpensive way of trying to help local hotels spread worldwide without depending on foreign management as it is very expensive," he said.

He claimed that most of the locally-managed hotels lacked training in various specialties, a service his firm was ready to provide.

"We also provide local hotels with professional people in different specialties and we want to develop and modernise our hotel systems to comply with the services system across the world," the local agent of the IHDC said.

"The political situation is discouraging tourists to visit the Kingdom," Mr. Jweinat added. "But the Ministry of Tourism is putting their utmost efforts to develop this sector."

Political uncertainty since hardline Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took over in June 1997 and Iraq's of-and-on confrontation with the United Nations, has scared off many tourists.

But despite these challenges, construction of a handful five-star hotels in Jordan have continued unabated on the hopes that tourism will prosper in the near future.

Many are counting on turning Jordan into a centre to host international meetings and business conventions. They also hope to benefit from millions of Christian tourists expected to visit the Holy Land to celebrate the end of the second millennium.

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Arsenal or Inter Milan for Baggio

MILAN (AFP) — Italy's World Cup star Roberto Baggio is set to play for either Arsenal or Inter Milan next season.

Bologna president Giuseppe Frascara Gazzoni has all but given up hope of keeping the most prolific goalscorer still playing in the Serie A, and admits that the choice is now between Highbury and San Siro.

"The chances of Roby leaving us have unfortunately risen to 99.9 percent," he said. "Arsenal and Inter are offering him something that we can't: the European Champions League."

"It's a bit more prestigious than the Intertoto Cup, but we haven't given up yet. I've given his manager our latest offer in writing — a 35 per cent pay rise and the

"Baggio School" project for when he's stopped playing.

"We obviously want to keep him: Roby can do things with his feet that other people can't even do with their hands... But Arsenal are offering him 18 billion lira (\$6 million) over three years."

"And we can't afford that sort of money," Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti, who likes the idea of Baggio alongside Ronaldo, is expected to make a lower offer than the English champions — 12 billion lira (\$4 million) over three years.

But the aces up Moratti's sleeve are that Baggio has never shown any desire to leave the Serie A, and that Inter are willing to loan Bologna one of their many

young talents, like Nigerian Olympic champion Nwankwo Kanu.

Gazzoni said: "The idea of taking Kanu isn't new, I talked about it with Moratti back in January. He could be our new star."

However, Gazzoni is also interested in gifted teenage playmaker Andrea Pirlo, who Inter are currently buying from relegated Serie A outfit Brescia.

The move to Inter would not be a complete surprise to Baggio, who nearly ended up there in 1995 when he left Juventus; signing instead for what proved to be an unhappy two-year stay at neighbours AC Milan.

Moratti said: "This time I want to talk to Baggio myself, just so there's no

repeat of what happened three years ago."

Baggio joined Bologna last summer on a two-year contract which could be rescinded by either side after the first year. The striker has until July 15 to exercise that option — although Gazzoni is pressing for a decision from the 31-year-old before he leaves for the World Cup finals on June 5.

"I know he has until July 15, but that was in the old contract and since we're now talking about a new one, Baggio and his manager ought to tell me what's happening after the friendly against Sweden on June 2," he said.

Laudrup insists he will join Chelsea

LONDON (AFP) —

Denmark's World Cup winger Brian Laudrup claims he will join English Premiership side Chelsea despite Glasgow Rangers chairman David Murray's attempts to thwart the move.

Murray is demanding compensation for Laudrup but the player is convinced the move will go ahead as planned without a fee.

"Let me make it clear: my contract with Rangers expires on Sunday night at 2400 hours, and the club after that time has definitely no rights or claims on me," he said Tuesday.

"This dispute is apparently the gratitude for giving Rangers four of my best footballing years. I must say that I feel surprised and deeply disappointed — I don't think I deserve this."

Laudrup says he was taken aback by Murray's reaction to his request for a move.

"When I said goodbye after the Cup final, I did not so much as receive one flower as thanks from the powers at the club."

"That treatment has given me an ache in the heart especially when I think about how much me and my family gave to Rangers."

World Cup countdown with Franz Beckenbauer

Are you a World Cup expert? Then let me challenge you

11) Goals are the most exciting aspect of any game of football, that goes without saying. But with the passing of time, the importance of tactics has increased notably. Frequently, not losing is more important than winning.

Not for nothing is 1-0 the most common result in all the World Cup matches. In total, 88 World Cup finals match-

es have ended with this minimal goal difference. But the other extreme also exists: virtual torrents of goals which are inexplicable and result in, at times, scandalous victories.

What was the highest win ever scored in the final phase of a World Cup?

Facts and figures about the participating countries

GERMANY

356,970 sq km Capital: Berlin
Population: 81,538,801 228.4 per sq km (1994)
Principal language: German
Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 25,580. — (1994)

Participation in World Cup championships:

IRAN

1,648,000 sq km Capital: Teheran
Population: 59,778,000 — 36.3 per sq km (1994)
Principal language: Farsi
Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 2,230. — (1992)

Participation in World Cup championships:

ITALY

301,323 sq km Capital: Rome
Population: 57,268,578 — 190.1 per sq km (1994)
Principal language: Italian
Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 19,840. (1994)

Participation in World Cup championships:

Solve the country contest daily to find the phrase at the end of Beckenbauer's World Cup countdown

12) This kingdom has experienced many foreign rulers. The Roman were followed by the Vandals, Arabs, Portuguese, Spanish and French.

In World War II many a refugee fleeing the Nazis stopped over here on the way from Europe to America. The country's biggest city became world famous through a legendary Hollywood film of the same name — even if the love story in the wartime refugee setting was actually shot in far-off California.

In 1975 the still extremely powerful king ordered the occupation of the western part of the world's biggest desert which was still a Spanish protectorate. Fourteen years of war with an indigenous separatist movement was the result. Tourists, by far the country's highest source of income, admire the impressive products of the Arah — and what is left of the Roman — cultures, and also the world famous carpets made here. They are named after the country's main population group.

Solution:

The phrase we are looking for refers to a rather precise, though harsh definition of an ability considered indispensable in the world of diplomacy.

Please fill in the respective letters in the corresponding positions:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

Please enter the letters of the country as instructed in the solution squares as follows:

Second letter of the country in position 23.
Seventh letter in position 56.

ANSWERS

CHALLENGE QUIZ

10) The World Cup was officially inaugurated on July 18th, Uruguay's national day, and on that day the home team played and beat Peru 1-0. The delay in the inauguration was due to the fact that work on the Centenario Stadium had not been completed.

COUNTRY CONTEST

10) Denmark

PHOTO CONTEST

10) This time there are two errors, one in the caption and one in the photo. The goal was scored from a penalty and not a free kick. The ball went into goal on exactly the side that Goycochea was leaping towards, but the shot was unstoppable — even for the goalie whose speciality was stopping unstoppable penalties.

Boksic likely to miss World Cup

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) — Croatian striker Alen Boksic has been advised to undergo knee surgery and could miss the World Cup.

Croatia's coach Miroslav Ciro Blazevic told Sportske Novosti (Sports News) daily that the team's doctor said the surgery is necessary.

Boksic, who plays for Rome's Lazio, is training with the Croatian team but the knee is causing him problems.

"If he undergoes surgery, who knows how long the rehabilitation will last?" Blazevic said.

"If he doesn't go, it is doubtful how much he can play with a knee in that state."

The doctors "will do everything possible" to prepare Boksic for the World Cup, but his participation is now questionable, Blazevic said.

The final decision is expected this week.

"If God and luck help us, Boksic would definitely be ready to play in the second round and quarter-finals," Blazevic said.

Blazevic accused Lazio of not sending Boksic for treatment when the problem appeared. He claimed



Lazio deliberately downplayed the injury as it negotiated Boksic's transfer to AC Milan.

Croatia is in Group H of the World Cup with two-time champions Argentina and fellow rookies Japan

and Jamaica.

The good news for Blazevic is that Robert Jarni, who injured a hamstring muscle earlier this month, is in better form now.

Zagallo's appetite for success undimmed

PARIS (AFP) — The Grand Old Man of the World Cup he may be, but the voracious appetite for success is undiminished and Mario Jorge Lobo Zagallo sees no reason why he can't pick up a fifth World Cup triumph this summer.

With the exception of Pele, the driving force behind three wins, Zagallo, who turns 67 in August, deserves the epithet of Brazil's Mr. Football.

It was his privilege to be coach of the greatest team of all time, when Pele and company ripped apart a highly-talented Italy side in the 1970 final in Mexico.

And four years ago he was involved again as assistant to Carlos Alberto Pereira when a 24-year barren spell faded away in the heat of Pasadena as Brazil again triumphed, albeit far less spectacularly, over the Italians in USA 94.

But Zagallo was no mean player either, picking up winners medals alongside a teenage Pele in Sweden in 1958 and again in Chile in 1962, wreaking havoc on the left wing for the "auriverde".

With his subsequent coaching exploits he is the only man to have featured in four World Cup triumphs.

Yet, contrary to what one might expect of the man entrusted once again with the task of conducting the world's great entertainers to the samba beat, Zagallo is no dreamy soccer romantic.

To him, flair and hard work must co-exist in equal measure and discipline is his watchword.

And woe betide anyone who ignores the code of the man born in the northern coastal town of Maceio who made his name with America, Flamengo and Botafogo.

With such talent in the squad, the intriguing question is how far natural Brazilian brilliance can gel with Zagallo's innate caution.

And what price flair for a man who believes that "we must remain compact" and "I'd rather play an ugly game and win than pretty football and lose"?

Such thinking lies behind the decision to limit the attack to Ronaldo and one other — probably the wayward Romario — rather than play a third striker.

But the philosophy brought 14 straight wins following the Tournoi de France win over England and if Zagallo keeps infighting to a minimum, it can work in France.

Zagallo's love of hard toil has earned him the nickname "Formiguinha" — little ant. And when ants all pull together, few burdens, even retaining the title, are too great to bear.



The Argentine national soccer team poses before a friendly World Cup warm-up against South Africa May 25. Front row (L-R): Claudio Lopez, Diego Simeone, Gabriel Batistuta, Ariel Ortega and Sebastian Veron. Back row (L-R): Matias Almeyda, Roberto Sensi, Javier Zanetti, Pablo Paz, Roberto Ayala and German Burgos (Reuters photo)

Scotland indebted to Elliott's grandmother

PARIS (AFP) — Matt Elliott, one of the rising stars of the Scotland national squad, had a confession to make when he was first named in the squad for the friendly against France last year.

The highly-rated Leicester star admitted to the nation's press that he had only been to Scotland once in his life — and that was on a school trip as a 10-year-old.

The 29-year-old shaven-headed central defender was born and brought up in London but qualifies for Scotland because of his grandmother.

His career began slowly starting out at non-league Epsom and Ewell before he moved to Charlton in 1988.

Disillusioned at not securing a first-team place, he crawled around the lower leagues for the next eight years, playing for Torquay, Scunthorpe and

then Oxford before arriving in the Premiership with Leicester.

Elliott settled in quickly and became a fixture in Martin O'Neill's side as they clinched a place in Europe by winning the League Cup and he has since become a target for England's leading clubs.

Oxford manager Denis Smith, who made a huge profit when he sold Elliott to Leicester £1.7 million (\$2.7 million) after buying him from Scunthorpe four years ago for £170,000, believes Scotland have captured a gem.

Smith said: "I have been telling people for the past three years that if Elliott was Dutch he would be in their international team."

"He is 6ft 4ins and weighs in around 14 1/2 stone, yet he is very comfortable on the ball for such a big lad."

"Matt has always had the ability. He likes to play the

ball out of defence, that's his strength."

"I think he's made a good decision in opting for Scotland. England still have this stereotype of a big centre back being only good for clearing and heading the ball."

"Matt's got those qualities as well and weighs in with a few goals every season. But his game is not based on power in the air."

Smith added: "The Scots will like what they see. Matt won't be overawed in that company. He is very level-headed."

"The only surprise is that it has taken him so long to get this far. I am sure he will take his chance if he is given it."

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 2	GALLERIA 1	Helwan Yousif
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Miller lifts Pacers past Bulls

INDIANAPOLIS (AFP) — One second from grabbing command of their playoff series, the Chicago Bulls were stunned by Reggie Miller and must now fight to reclaim momentum from the upstart Indiana Pacers.

Miller's dramatic three-point basket with seven-tenths of a second remaining lifted the Pacers past Chicago 96-94 here Monday, equalising their National Basketball Association semifinal at two triumphs each.

"I stayed focused and in my rhythm, looked at the basket and the rest is history," Miller said. "All I had to do was get my feet square."

NBA Most Valuable Player Michael Jordan fired a three-pointer at the buzzer that hanked off the backboard, rolled around the rim and fell out, condemning the reigning NBA champions to one of their bitterest defeats.

Jordan complained about officiating, including four critical decisions by referees in the final 21 seconds that set up Miller's winner, one of those non-calls as Miller pushed Jordan to get open for his last shot.

"It's us against the world, including the referees and everybody," Jordan said. "There's disappointment, anger, but we're mature enough to evaluate the situation and move forward."

Chicago coach Phil Jackson compared the loss to the Soviet Union beating the United States in the 1972 Olympic final after officials gave the Soviets three chances to play the final seconds.

"Our players felt like it was Munich '72 revisited," Jackson said. "They had a lot of opportunities they shouldn't have, so many debatable calls. The referees acted like they were afraid. There were calls it was hard to stomach."

Emotions and tensions are on edge in the best-of-seven series as the Bulls, seeking their sixth title in eight years, host game five Wednesday knowing they must return here for a sixth game Friday.

"Knowing Michael and the competitive drive he has, on that flight home he is cursing and cussing everyone out on that plane," Miller said. "I know he will be ready for Wednesday. This makes game five huge."

Utah awaits the winner in the NBA Finals. The Jazz, who swept the Los Angeles Lakers in the other semi-final, will host the first game of the championship series June 3 in Salt Lake City.

Miller was slowed by a sore right ankle but scored 15 points and was healthy enough to dance for joy after his final shot.

"We designed the play for him," Indiana coach Larry Bird said. "We didn't think he would be as wide open as he was. He was limping around all day but he made the shot when he counted."

Miller said he was worried his poor play might cost the Pacers, who trailed most of the game.

"I shouldn't have been out there. There's no way I should have played 42 minutes on that bad ankle," Miller said. "I felt I was killing them more than helping them out. I couldn't plant, couldn't push off, I was basically just a stand-still shooter out there and that's no good."

Miller, with a history of playoff heroics, vows the ankle will not keep him from battling the Bulls dynasty as the Pacers seek their first NBA Final.

"We're in the middle of the biggest series of a lot of guys' lives. I just have to get round-the-clock treatment and go for it," he said. "This is the biggest

time of my career. I want to be my best and I'm not. It's frustrating."

The Bulls want NBA officials to consider banishing Miller for his role in a scuffle near Chicago's bench in the final seconds. Jordan said Miller hit Chicago's Ron Harper in the chest.

"I think everyone saw Reggie become the aggressor in the melee, but no one got penalized," Jordan said.

Miller denied hitting Harper, who had bumped him hard at the end of game three Saturday.

"I didn't throw a punch," Miller said. "I'm not dumb enough to throw a punch in a playoff game. I was trying to get away from the ruckus. I was pushed off balance into the bench. I was trying to get out of there."

Indiana made an 11-2 run in the fourth quarter, grabbing their first lead since the first quarter at 88-87 on Derrick McKey's three-pointer with 4:10 remaining and setting the stage for the finishing flurry.

Jordan scored a game-high 25 points despite being cut over his right eye seven minutes into the game by Indiana's Rick Smith when the Dutch center blocked his shot.

Smith led Indiana with 26 points, taking advantage of foul trouble by his Chicago counterpart, Australian Luc Longley. The Bulls center had 10 points and two rebounds, fouling out with 4:45 to go.

Toni Kukoc scored 18 points, Ron Harper added 17 and Scottie Pippen had 12 points and 10 rebounds for Chicago. Longley added 10 points. Dennis Rodman had four points and 16 rebounds.

The Pacers, who matched a club record with 11 three-point baskets, remained the only team unbeaten at home in the playoffs.

Jordan to take part in Moscow Youth Games

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) has given the go-ahead to six federations to take part in the inaugural Youth Games in Moscow this summer.

The Jordanian delegation to the July 11-19 event will comprise 9 officials and 23 athletes in gymnastics, table tennis, judo, tennis, wrestling and fencing.

According to JOC Vice-President Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz, the games are open for juniors between the ages of 14-17 only and are intended to give rising athletes much-needed international exposure.

"While the federations have named the athletes, not all of the participating players are champions with past results. However, taking part in such an event will bring out the best in young, promising stars," he told the Jordan Times.

Hashem Dabbas, vice-president of the Jordan Gymnastics Federation, will head the delegation which includes the following:

- Gymnastics:**
Athletes: Ghida Qudus, Nancy Samour, Yasmin Kheir, Shatha Turk, Walid Abu Smeid, Jad Mazhar, Tareq Abu Ayad, Mohammad Abu Saleh, Amjad Abbadi, Camelia Mendresel
Coach: Official 2nd head of delegation: Hashem Ibrahim
- Wrestling:**
Athletes: Ahmad Sulayman, Murad Abu Hatab, Mohammad Haddad, Saleh Yousef
Coach: Coach
- Fencing:**
Athletes: Jaser Khader, Mohammad Kahaha, Salim Abu Sheikha, Huthaim Qudus, Khalid Ayyar, Ali Abu Zama'n
Coach: Coach
- Tennis:**
Athletes: Yazeed Nuseirat, Ahmad Haddad
Coach: Coach
- Judo:**
Athletes: Abdulrahman Rita, Yousef Olayan, to be named later
Coach: Coach
- Table Tennis:**
Athletes: Shawqi Diya, Rued Montani, Ahmad Awwad, Bura' Abu Ghanmi, Ayman Kurdi, Osama Far
Coach: Official

French Open

Kuerten and Seles stage impressive returns

PARIS (AFP) — Defending men's singles champion Gustavo Kuerten and former three-times women's title-holder Monica Seles issued ominous warnings to would-be opponents at the French Open on Tuesday when they raced to impressive straight-sets wins.

The 21-year-old Kuerten, who won over the French fans with his happy-go-lucky tennis and infectious grin, was back wearing his "football-style" kit and yellow tennis shoes chalked up a ruthless 6-0, 6-2, 6-2 victory over French wildcard entry Charles Auffray.

Seles, playing for the first time since the death of her father earlier this month, left only a few crumbs of comfort for 20-year-old Australian Annabel Ellwood and she chalked up a 6-0, 6-2 win in just 51 minutes.

The sixth-seeded 24-year-old American, champion here in 1990, 1991 and 1992 and a semi-finalist last year, will now play either another Australian Kerry-Anne Guse or Marion Maruska of Austria for a place in the third-round.

"I'm just going to take it one match at a time," said Seles after her win. "Obviously this has been a tough time with a lot of distractions for me. But I'm



Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain returns a backhand during her match against Jana Kandarr of Germany in their first round match at the French Open at Roland Garros stadium. Sanchez-Vicario won the match 6-2 7-5 (Reuters photo)

glad I'm playing here. It was tough being at the house after my dad died because of all the memories and so on."

Kuerten, who now faces either twice-finalist Andre Agassi or Russian Marat Safin, left his opponent looking shell-shocked.

The headseed 25-year-old Auffray, a modest 195 in

the world rankings, found himself trailing 0-6, 0-2 before he won his first game.

"I didn't play very well out there — but it was a great experience," he said, adding: "I was very nervous to be playing the champion and to be on the centre-court. There's so much room out there. It's unlike any other court I've ever played on."

"All I can say is that he is very fast, has excellent anticipation and his very good and angled serves. He plays really well."

Referring to his possible second-round showdown with Agassi, Kuerten said: "It's always interesting to play him. There will be a lot of people watching a match like that. But whoever I play it will be tough. I have to play good tennis, have fun and play my best all the time."

Asked what had changed since his title win twelve months ago, the Brazilian, clearly relaxed, grinned: "Well — my hair is shorter...my ranking better."

And when asked if he had spoken to his compatriot Ronaldo, the "football-mad" Kuerten replied: "Not really. Right now I don't need any tips about football — just tennis."

Australian World No. 4 Pat Rafter completed his "Houdini-style great escape act" when he completed a 6-

4-6, 6-0, 4-6, 10-8 on Monday.

The nightmare season of twice-champion Sergi Bruguera continued when he suffered a shock first-round exit after crashing 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 to Herman Guncy of Argentina.

"My ambitions and motivation are gone," said the 27-year-old Spaniard who won here in 1993 and 1994 and who was a finalist last year.

"I have been feeling so low I have even been thinking of giving up altogether," Bruguera slumped to 23rd in the rankings after winning only three matches in his last five tournaments.

Guncy, the world's 101 ranked player, now plays either high-serving Marc Rosset of Switzerland or Gianluca Pozzi of Italy.

Fourth-seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, bidding for a hat-trick of singles titles, beat Jana Kandarr of Germany 6-2, 7-5 in 91 minutes.

The 26-year-old from Barcelona, who won the trophy in 1989 and 1994, swept confidently through the first set in just half an hour, but Kandarr made her work much harder in the second.

Sanchez-Vicario now plays Romania's Catalina Cristea who beat powerful South African Mariaan de Swardt 6-1, 6-2.

7 (5-7), 3-6, 6-1, 6-3, 6-2 victory over Canadian Sebastian Lareau.

Rafter had trailed his 100th-ranked opponent by two sets to love the previous evening before fighting back to two sets all.

The 25-year-old from Queensland, a semi-finalist here twelve months ago, now plays compatriot Jason Stoltenberg who put out Spaniard Galo Blanco 6-2,



Defending champion Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil plays a forehand to Charles Auffray of France in their first round match at the French Open in Roland Garros stadium. Kuerten won the match 6-0 6-2 6-3 (Reuters photo)



Monica Seles of the USA in action during her match against Annabel Ellwood of Australia in the French tennis open at Roland Garros stadium, May 26. Seles defeated Ellwood 6-0 6-3 (Reuters photo)

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